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MEDITATIONS ON THE MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD AND EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

REV. J. S. TUTE.

MEDITATIONS.

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ON

THE MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD

AND

EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

BY THE

REV. J. S. TUTE.

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PREFACE.

IT may perhaps not be amiss to mention, that of the following Meditations the first seven were given during the Mission, which was held this year in Leeds, to the Communicants of Christ Church in that town, as a portion of the work which was assigned to me as Assistant Mission Priest. They were afterwards given to my own parishioners during the subsequent Lent. The remaining seven formed the course of Meditations in the previous Lent. They are now published in the hope that they may be useful to others besides those to whom they were first addressed.

MARKINGTON,
Vigil of S. James, 1875.

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MEDITATIONS.

The Most Precious Blood of Christ.

MEDITATION I.

THE SACRIFICE OF ABEL.

MANY reasons have been given why the Sacrifice which Abel offered to GOD was more acceptable than that which was offered by Cain, but upon one of these reasons only do I wish your thoughts to dwell, as it will I trust, through GOD'S mercy, afford much food for meditation. As this series of Meditations all have for their central thought the most precious Blood of CHRIST, that reason for the acceptance of Abel's Sacrifice, which brings it into closest relationship with the Sacrifice of CHRIST, is the one upon which we shall most naturally and most profitably ponder.

Point I. "Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering He had

not respect." Because Abel offered with Faith and Cain did not. The offering of the firstlings of the flock was an acknowledgment on the part of Abel that he was a sinner; that he could not approach the most holy LORD GOD except by the death of an innocent creature. He had learned, clearly from his father Adam, not merely that GOD must be worshipped with sacrifice, but that the penalty of sin is death; and further, that the Death of the promised SEED would bring pardon, and life, and reconciliation with GOD. This is clearly the teaching of S. Paul, who says that "by Faith Abel offered unto GOD a more excellent Sacrifice than Cain." For he had Faith in CHRIST, Who was to come. The sacrifice of the firstlings of his flock, dimly foreshadowed to him the great Sacrifice of Him Who is the very LAMB of GOD, the FIRST-BORN from the dead. It was with that generous impulse of true devotion, which is the fruit of a living Faith, that he chose out the best of his flock and of the fat thereof.

He felt his sinfulness, his unworthiness, his need of a SAVIOUR; and therefore did he come before GOD with such an offering, and was accepted by the GOD of Truth. On the contrary, Cain came with the fruits of the earth in his hand, possibly such a sacrifice as Adam was wont to offer in Paradise in the days of his innocence, when, as ruler over the things of this world, he came with a sacrifice humbly to worship and praise the MOST HIGH, and to acknowledge that He alone is the true and Supreme RULER of earth and heaven. But that which was proper in a state of innocency, was unbefitting an unforgiven man. So when

Cain approached the Lord with this sacrifice only in his hand, he came in the pride of his heart, acknowledging neither his own sin nor the sin which he had derived from his father. So, feeling no need of Christ he denied Him, and therefore unto him and to his offering God had not respect: for we are alone acceptable to God in His Beloved Son.

Now, consider whether you have acted, or are now acting at all like Cain. Is sin that painful, loathsome, dreadful thing to you that Scripture represents it really to be? Do you want to look upon yourself as righteous, to put out of your own sight the manifold sins and transgressions of which you have been really guilty? Perhaps you cannot altogether conceal from yourself that you are a sinner; there are sins which are too distinctly marked upon your soul ever to be forgotten by your conscience; but excepting these, is it the case that you scarcely feel yourself guilty before God? And even with respect to the sins you cannot forget, do you not try to think lightly of them, that you may not be condemned before yourself as a sinner? For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things. Cain perhaps had been guilty of no sin that greatly troubled his conscience, so he bore himself as an innocent man. Is it thus also with us? Do we feel to have but little need of pardon and peace because there is no striking sin in all the catalogue of our misdoings? Oh let us beware of that snare, that because we have lived good, moral, respectable lives, we have no need of a Saviour's Blood. Rather let us enter honestly into the house of our heart, and search whether all our

seeming goodness is but outward and unreal, and our hearts are indeed far away from GOD.

Point II. When the evil deed was done, GOD laid before Cain, who would fain have excused himself, that wickedness of which he had been guilty, showing to him that no sin, however secret, can escape the knowledge of GOD, nor go without its due punishment. "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto Me from the ground." "It is not *his* voice, nor his soul, but the voice of that blood which thou hast shed which accuseth thee. It is thy own wicked deed, not thy brother, which is the accuser. The earth also is a witness, which hath received that blood."[1] Consider the terrible efficacy of this blood. It was crying out for vengeance. Cain refused to shed the blood of a lamb, which, because it spoke of CHRIST, Who was to come, was a means of pardon. And now he was guilty of his brother's blood, which was crying unto GOD. He had refused a small humiliation, he brought upon himself a terrible condemnation. The consequences of what he had done were now beyond his control. GOD had taken the cause into His own Hand, and retribution, speedy or slow, was sure to follow. Of all the stains of sins, blood-stains are the most terrible. For he who sheddeth blood not only destroys his neighbour, and cuts him off from every hope and joy of this world, and perhaps also destroys his soul, by depriving him of that time which might have been given him for repentance, but also sins directly against GOD, Who is the GIVER of Life. So the Blood of Abel spoke of vengeance, not because

[1] S. Ambrose, De Cain et Abel, II. c. ix. 30.

Abel was unforgiving in his death, but because so terrible a breach of God's Law called for an equally terrible punishment. Now let us consider this, that God will call us to account for every act of uncharitableness. Our Lord has taught us that the bitter thought and the violent word will meet with their due punishment. There are blood-stains upon these. The wish hindered by circumstances, the word which smites like a blow, cry aloud for vengeance unto the ears of God. Men speak forth the words of cruelty, of bitterness, of calumny, which pierce like a sharp sword, and they go their way, heedless about what they have done. But the wounds which they have made in the heart of another, do they not cry unto God? And if men forget, and think that God has passed them by and forgotten them, let them listen to our Lord's solemn words, "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof at the Day of Judgment." And if of idle or bitter words, what of actual deeds of violence, and all the sad results of anger unrestrained? Let us, then, once more enter into the house of our heart, and see if in any form the mark of Cain be there; whether there be one single drop of man's blood upon our soul. Can any man say, I am clean, I am pure from the blood of all men. If we are careless, if we are idle, if we hesitate to look, lest we should find not a single sin only, but a vile heap of deformity there, let us listen to the warning Voice of God. "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."

Point III. Abel, as a reward for his faith and obedience, became a type of Christ, Whom he had

honoured in his sacrifice; and Cain in a similar manner became a type of those Jews who were the true authors of our LORD's Death, being His kinsmen according to the flesh. The actions of Cain and Abel were therefore of far greater moment than they at the time had any conception of.

They meet at the Cross, but oh, how different! Abel's Death has become glorious with the light of the Cross; Cain's sin has become proportionately hideous as a foreshadowing of the most terrible crime the world has ever known, or could ever know—the crucifying of the Only-Begotten SON of GOD. Consider then how little we know the real effect of what we do, and the wide and lasting consequence of our actions for good or for evil. Abel, being dead, yet speaketh. He, simply and with a single heart, obeyed the commandment of GOD; and though this for a moment brought him suffering, it brought him also, by the mercy of GOD, the fulness of an Eternal Reward. Should not this thought make us exceedingly careful about our actions, that we may have a Reward, not indeed proportioned to our works, but by the exceeding Goodness of GOD, even proportioned to those blessings which His Providence may cause to arise out of our works. Or, on the other hand, our evil deeds may run out into woeful consequences, which we never contemplated; and evils may spring up in the distant future, the direct and fearful results of sins which we have carelessly committed.

When an action is completed, the consequences are very frequently out of our control. How necessary then it is, that we should be watchful, that we should

know ourselves, that we should have well before our eyes the very sinfulness of our wayward heart; that we may not be taken unawares by a sudden temptation, and commit a sin, which will be a bitter burden and sorrow all our life long; nay, the consequences of which may even endure throughout the endless years of Eternity; when we should experience without hope the bitter punishment of Cain, and say with fearful emphasis, "My punishment is greater than I can bear."

Point IV. The voice of Abel's Blood crieth unto God for vengeance; but there is a Blood that speaketh better things than that of Abel, even the most Precious Blood of Christ. They who shed His Blood indeed sinned, like Cain, most grievously; but He, in His Love and Mercy, gave Himself up that He might die for us, that we might be redeemed with those most precious streams. Oh how infinitely precious are those streams, for they are the Blood of the Eternal Son of God. We know this mighty and mysterious Truth, we have heard it so many times, that our familiarity with it has blunted its force in our minds; yet how worthy is it of our devoutest consideration. What an awfulness of consequences, what a marvellousness of love! If man's actions have results so wide and so lasting, what shall we say to the actions of God? Our sins may be deep, evil, horrible, filling us with terror; but these Divine Streams can reach even unto us, and can make the most defiled soul white and pure, that cometh in true Faith to the Fountain, which is open for sin and for all uncleanness. Let us then put away all self-deceiving, all false supposition of our

own goodness, and let us honestly look into our hearts, our lives, our deeds, our words, our thoughts, our intentions. Let us make no excuse. Rather let us seek to know the very worst about ourselves, saying unto GOD, Make me to know my iniquity and my sin. For when our sins stand up before us, more in number than the hairs of our head, and our heart faileth us at the dismal sight, then shall we the more readily and anxiously seek cleansing in that Most Precious Blood which was shed to take away the sins of the world.

O LORD JESUS, draw our souls to Thee. "Try me, O GOD, and seek the ground of my heart; prove me and examine my ways; look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Oh let me not shrink back from the work of self-knowledge. Thou, O LORD, knowest me altogether; into the innermost parts of my heart Thine Eyes penetrate; no thought of mine is hidden from Thee, the multitude of my sins are before Thee; there is not a word of my tongue but Thou, O LORD, knowest it altogether. "Whither shall I go then from Thy SPIRIT, or whither shall I go then from Thy Presence?" For Thou art of purer Eyes than to look upon iniquity. I can only flee from the voice of my sins unto the foot of Thy Cross. I have sinned, what shall I do unto Thee, O Thou Preserver of Men? Let the Voice of Thy Precious Blood, Who hast in Thy Mercy and Condescension vouchsafed to call us brethren, cry out in the Highest Heavens before the Throne of GOD for our pardon and for our cleansing. O LAMB of GOD that takest away the sins of the world, grant us Thy Peace. O SAVIOUR of the World,

Who by Thy Cross and Precious Blood hast redeemed us, save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O LORD.

MEDITATION II.

THE SACRIFICES OF THE LAW.

THE two great ends, which the sacrifices of GOD'S ancient people were especially to serve, were to impress in the most powerful and vivid manner the great Truth, that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins; and from the necessary imperfection of the atonement which was made by the blood of bulls and of calves, to lead men's minds forward to CHRIST, Whose Blood alone was able to make reconciliation for us unto GOD. All the real efficacy which arose from the use of those ancient sacrifices, sprang from their relationship, as types, to the One great Sacrifice. "These Sacrifices could not take away sin, but only through obedience to the ordinance of GOD, and through faith in the promised SEED. They were indeed very instructive and proper to lead sinners to repentance and amendment of life, when they saw that their sins could not be forgiven, but by the death of an innocent creature, bleeding and dying before their eyes, to make an atonement for sin."[1] By them there was no true cleansing of the conscience, because CHRIST was yet to come. They sanctified only to the purifying of the flesh. Yet they continually foretold

[1] Bp. Wilson on the LORD'S Supper, Sec. 1.

CHRIST, at the same time leading men to a deeper and deeper sense of the loathsomeness and deadly nature of sin, so that it is not only because the Law sets before us the commandments of GOD, with the fearful statement, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the Law to do them," but also, because all the ordinances of worship tended also to deepen their sense of sin, that by the Law is the knowledge of sin. Thus GOD provided that men should feel the extremity of that misery into which they had plunged themselves, in order that they might all the more gladly and firmly embrace the Remedy, when in the fulness of time It should be made manifest. Let us consider a few of the more prominent of the ancient sacrifices under this aspect.

Point I. When the whole nation of the Children of Israel was about to be delivered from the Egyptian bondage, and to become a holy nation unto the LORD, they were commanded to slay a lamb for each household, and to strike the lintel and the two side posts of the door with the blood of the lamb; and thus when the destroying angel smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, they were delivered. Now when they at that time placed themselves under the protection of the most HOLY TRINITY by a threefold mark of blood, and showed their Faith in the very LAMB of GOD, Who was to come, and by Whose command indeed these very marks were imprinted upon the entrances of their houses; then were the chains of their bondage broken. Then did they cease to be a nation of slaves, they became a free people, they were born at once a

holy nation. The blood of the Paschal Lamb washed away for ever the degradation of slavery. Yet their former evil condition and their present deliverance from death by death, from slavery by blood, was never to be forgotten. The Feast of the Passover was to be celebrated every year at the season that they came out of Egypt, as one of the special religious rites of the people of Israel. For it not only looked back upon the past, and was a memorial of their sin and of God's mercy, but it also looked forward to the future, when at the self-same season a greater Deliverance should take place, and the very Lamb of God should Himself be slain, that all mankind might be delivered from the bondage and power of death, and of him that had the power of death, that is the devil. As slavery is a degradation, the slavery under which all men had passed, the slavery of sin and Satan, was the deepest of degradations: so the true Paschal Lamb, in shedding His most precious Blood for our redemption, bore not only the pain but the shame of the Cross. He was crucified as if He were a slave. For crucifixion was the punishment of slaves, or of those who had forfeited by their crimes their equality with the rest of men.

Yet how little do we often think of the shamefulness of sin! How little do we realise our degraded position when we have made ourselves the slaves of sin! Perhaps we boast of our freedom; we think we are making use of our liberty to do what we choose, to break the commandments of God. Yet all the liberty that we are really exercising is the liberty of a hand that is merely free to rivet fast its own chains.

and to do no more. Surely if we look to the Price of our Redemption, the Blood that was shed, the shame that was endured, that we might be set free, we shall cast ourselves down with a cry of bitter sorrow and unfeigned repentance before the Cross of JESUS, and say, Deliver us, O LORD our GOD, break for us the gates of brass, smite in sunder the bars of iron, and let the chains fall off from our hands.

Point II. Almost all things are by the Law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission. The whole covenant between GOD and His ancient people was a covenant of blood. The very dedication of the covenant itself was with blood. Each child of Israel entered into covenant with GOD by the blood of circumcision. When Aaron and his sons were consecrated to the priesthood, they were touched with the blood of the sacrifices; so also the very altar itself was sanctified with blood, showing us in a very clear and manifest way, that even no act of religion and worship can be acceptable to GOD so long as we are not in a state of reconciliation with Him; and further, that this Reconciliation can only take place by the shedding of Innocent Blood. You cannot come unto GOD except through the Blood of JESUS. Between us and GOD there must lie a Sacrifice, Whose Blood can touch us and cleanse us from sin. For our sins have separated between us and GOD, and the gulf of separation is infinite; as far as the Heavens are above the earth, as far as the East is from the West. Oh, who can ascend into the hill of the LORD? Who can bridge over that mighty distance? No one but He Who is Himself GOD; no

Sacrifice can make an atonement for us unto God but that Sacrifice, the merits of which reach from earth to Heaven. No blood but His can wash away every sin and stain of sin, can reconcile us unto God, and make us at one again with God. When the Blood of the Covenant is sprinkled upon our souls, then is the conscience set free. For then our sins are as far away from us as we were away from God. "Look how high the Heaven is in comparison of the earth, so great is His mercy also towards them that fear Him. Look how wide also the east is from the West, so far hath He set our sins from us." Let us consider whether we have really and truly anxiously sought the cleansing of this Most Precious Blood. Have we realised the condition of those whose sins have separated between them and their God?

Have we ever thought seriously that this perhaps may be our own condition? We are far too ready to think comfortable things for ourselves, to take it for granted that we are in a good way, or at any rate that there is very little amiss with our souls. But what if that very little has made the separation between God and us? Oh let us look anxiously, honestly into our hearts and see if there is one wilful sin there, that the Blood of the Covenant may not have been shed in vain for us.

Point III. One Day only in each year was the High Priest permitted to enter into the Holy of Holies, on the great Day of Atonement. But he could not enter there without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people. And the reconciliation was extended further than this, for even the Altar that

was before the LORD was also to be reconciled. The High Priest was to sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel. What a picture does this give us of the exceeding holiness of GOD and of the defiling power of sin. Even that which was the daily means of their reconciliation was defiled with the sins of the people. So, so far from perfection are we, that our very best and holiest acts cannot be accepted before GOD unless they are purged with Blood. There is a stain upon all. Do what we will, be as careful as we may, imperfection, sin, defilement cling to our devoutest prayers and our most single-hearted offerings unto GOD. What continual need we have, therefore, that the Blood of JESUS should touch our soul and take away our sin.

Point IV. But if our holiest acts are spotted with the stains of sin, what must we say to those sins which arise, not from weakness and inadvertence, but from wilfulness? These are represented to us under the type of Leprosy, a loathsome, defiling disease, dangerous, and often highly contagious, so that he who was a leper was separated from his brethren, and was bidden to warn all who approached him of their danger by crying out Unclean, Unclean. When the leper was healed, he could only be cleansed by a double sacrifice. He was required first to show himself to the priest, who was to take one of two birds and kill it over running water, receiving the blood into an earthen vessel; then the priest was bidden to take cedar wood, scarlet, hyssop, and the living bird, and dipping them into the blood to sprinkle the leper

seven times, then let the living bird go free. After an interval of seven days another sacrifice was to be offered for him, and with the blood of a Lamb he was to be made quite clean.

Let us reflect that if the type of sin required so careful and laborious a purgation, how careful we ought to be about sin itself, and how anxious that in cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh or spirit, we should do so thoroughly, making use of all the ordinances of God which He has provided for the perfect cleansing of our souls. Let us reflect upon the defiling, the corroding, the debasing, the deadening power of sin. We need not look around us, we have only to look into ourselves and consider what we are, to see all this. If we know anything of ourselves, if our conscience and our memory are not dead to all that is past—in childhood, in boyhood, in youth, in manhood, ay and in old age too—are there not sins which we carefully conceal in the secrecy of our own bosoms, which when they rise up in our memory (as they do from time to time), cause us the bitterest anguish, the most cruel shame, and the most fearful looking for of judgment to come, unless they have been washed away in the Blood of the Lamb? O Lord God, Lamb of God, That takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Purge us with hyssop, and we shall be clean; wash us in Thy Blood, and we shall be whiter than snow.

MEDITATION III.

THE INCARNATION.

THE holy Apostle, speaking of the Incarnation of the eternal SON of GOD, says, "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of Flesh and Blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the Same." As in His Incarnation, when He was conceived by the HOLY GHOST of the Virgin Mary, He first took that Blood Which was to be the instrument of our Salvation, we should approach the consideration of this holy and mysterious truth with devout awe and reverence, with trembling joy and love. He that is Mighty hath done to us great things, and holy is His Name.

Point I. Consider the infinite Love and Condescension of GOD. In order that there might be a Sacrifice which could make a true Atonement, in order that Blood might be shed which could take away sins, that the infinite distance between fallen man and GOD might be bridged over, He Himself took our Flesh and Blood. Though He was conceived without sin, yet He did not form for Himself new Flesh and Blood, but He took the Flesh and Blood of fallen man. "For since CHRIST assumed human nature that He might cleanse it from corruption, it was necessary that He should take Flesh and Blood from matter derived from Adam."[1] The Good Samaritan, in the fulness of His love, came where we were. He was made Man. So by taking our Flesh

[1] Sum. Theol. De Incarn., Q. xxxi. 1.

and Blood He sanctified them, He made them His own; and in Him God and Man were united. If we measure the greatness of the Love which caused Him so to humble Himself by the infinite condescension of this stupendous act, are we not overwhelmed with awe when we fairly bring before our minds this Act of Mercy, so far beyond all that we looked for? And when further we reflect that it was for us men and for our Salvation, ought we not to be filled with the liveliest gratitude and the most ardent Love? Yet how commonly do we hear of His Mercy and Goodness with dull ears and a heavy heart? We are not moved at the sight of that which has filled Heaven with wonder, and made Angels to fall down before the Throne of God in the profoundest adoration of His marvellous Lovingkindness towards the sons of men. Angels had sinned, yet He passed them by, though their nature is spiritual;[1] He came lower down, and in His infinite Pity to us, He took even our Flesh and Blood. "He willed to raise up and exalt even our weaker Nature with more abundant glory, and His Majesty contracted Itself; so that what He had of surpassing excellence, namely, Himself, He joined to our clay, and in one Person were united together God and clay, Majesty and infirmity, such utter insignificance and Sublimity so glorious. For nothing is loftier than God, nothing is more insignificant than Clay; and yet with such condescension did God come down into Clay, with such dignity did Clay ascend unto God, that whatever in It God did, the

[1] God is the Father of spirits (Heb. xii. 9); Angels are Sons of God (Job i. 6).

Clay is said to have done; whatever the Clay suffered, GOD is said to have suffered in It, in an unspeakable and incomprehensible mystery."[1] "Oh the depth of the riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of GOD! How unsearchable are His Judgments, and His Ways past finding out."

Point II. Consider next, that He humbled Himself thus into the dust, because we had fallen and laid our body as the ground, and our soul was bowed down and cleaved unto the dust; in order that nothing might be below the reach of His Mercy, He went into the mire and clay, that He might deliver us from the mire and clay, and might set our feet upon a Rock and order our goings. And, because in us the blood is the life, and our very life-stream had been polluted, He without sin took that very Blood, that by It we might be purified. In Him it became Life-giving, because It was the Blood of Him Who is the very LIFE Itself, that eternal LIFE Which was with the FATHER, and was manifested unto us. He took our Blood, that having exalted It by union with Himself, He might return It again to us a Stream of Salvation, cleansing every soul that is washed therein from all sin. We cannot sufficiently adore and praise Him for His wonderful Condescension and Mercy, which He has shown unto us. All our words and acts of thanksgiving are utterly insufficient to show forth His Praise. As He has come unto us with such complete Self-forgetfulness (if we may with reverence so speak), emptying Himself, as Holy Scripture says, the very least that we can do is to go unto Him, and give up

[1] S. Bernard in Vigil. Nat. Serm. iii. 8.

ourselves unto Him, that the end and object of His Incarnation may not be by us defeated, but that we may live to His Glory, Who has redeemed us with His Own Most Precious Blood.

Point III. Consider next, that although our blessed Lord was conceived without sin, and in Him was no sin, else He could not have redeemed the world, yet that He took not only that Nature which had fallen, but He chose also to be born of a line in which were found Bathsheba, the adulteress, and Rahab, the harlot, as well as the illustrious names of Abraham and David. For He came that He might save the very worst of sinners, who would come unto God by Him. So He touched in Himself and by His own Blood Bathsheba, and Rahab, and Tamar; that we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for a refuge unto the Hope set before us. For indeed that Hope is not only in Christ, but it is Christ Himself. So if His Humiliation is a reason why we should adore Him with the most perfect lowliness of body, soul, and spirit; it is also a reason why we should approach Him with the most unreserved confidence in the infinite boundlessness of His undying Love for lost and perishing sinners.

Oh! Lord Jesus, touch our hearts, and deliver us from everything that holds us back from Thee; increase our Faith in Thee, and in the saving efficacy of Thy most precious Blood. We have sinned, O Lord, but Thou canst save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Thee. Save us, O Lord, we beseech Thee, for Thy great Name and Mercy's sake. Amen.

Point IV. Consider in the next place, not only the infinite width of our LORD'S Merits as to sin, in that His Blood is able to cleanse and to purify from every sin, whatever it may be; and that there is no limit to Its efficacy, except the unwillingness and unbelief of sinners; but further, that this efficacy is as wide as the human race. For as He hath made of one Blood all men to dwell on the face of the whole earth, in taking our blood He at once put Himself into union with all men, with every tribe, and family, and nation in the world. So that not only GOD'S ancient people, of whom CHRIST came, and unto whom therefore the first blessings of His coming flowed; but every nation, the most exalted and the most degraded, the most intellectual and the most animal, may come unto GOD by Him; nay, must come unto GOD by Him if they will be saved. We stand aloof from our fellow-men, and think ourselves better than they; we despise them, and look at their condition as hopeless, because they seem to us low and degraded. But the SON of GOD, in the Love of His Humiliation, united Himself to every man, not being willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Let us ask ourselves whether we have not held back from intercourse with our fellow-men, not because we were afraid of falling into sin by the influence of their example, but because we trust to ourselves that we are righteous and despise others.

Point V. Our Blessed LORD took our nature, that He might taste Death for every man. He took our Blood, our Life; and this was in effect the taking of our death, since death was in the stream of our Life.

And in His wonderful Mercy He gave us in exchange His Life. He made our Blood, which He had taken, a Life-giving Stream. Thus, at the very first touch of His Hand, the Bondage in which all men were held began to be broken; and, when that precious Blood was shed, then did He destroy death, and overcome him that had the power of death, that is the Devil. Out of His side He shed forth both water and Blood, that we might not only be cleansed, but live. For He came by Water and Blood; not by water only, but by Water and Blood. And there are Three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the Water, and the Blood; and these Three agree in one.

Oh may that life-giving Spirit ever abide in us, and make us more and more partakers of the Blood of Christ; that we may daily become more and more pure and holy, and live the life of the Spirit, through the indwelling Presence of Jesus our Lord; that the old Adam may utterly and for ever die in us, and the new Man may abide in us for ever.

Meditation IV.

THE EUCHARISTIC GIFT.

Every time we draw near to receive the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, in earnest Faith and loving penitence, that sacred Flesh and Blood, which our Lord has taken for us men, and for our Salvation, is bestowed upon us. Thus, in a mystery, whilst He ever preserves in the most perfect union with Himself

that Flesh and Blood, which He had taken, He has found the means of again bestowing These upon us, uniting us to Them, and through Them making us partakers of the Divine Nature. This mystery of His unspeakable Goodness, by which He reverses in each one of us all the evil tendencies which our union with Adam has produced, began when in our Baptism we were first brought to Him. There, and through the means of that Holy Sacrament, not only were we made partakers of CHRIST, and Sons of GOD in CHRIST, but as a necessity for that union and adoption, we were first cleansed from all our former sins in His Most Holy Blood. The Incarnation, which up to that moment had been a fact, so to speak, external to us; but still (because the whole of Human Nature, every man in the universe, was affected by It,) had become the means by which we could be brought to GOD, and find Reconciliation, then touched us in very deed. The wonder-working power of the Almighty SPIRIT changed that which was dead into that which was living, and gave life unto our Spirit, by uniting us unto the SON of GOD, Who is the LIFE. For then were we born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of GOD. The Blood of JESUS CHRIST not only washed us from sin and made us holy, but entering into ourselves became in us a new Stream of Life; not like the life of our mortality, but endless, powerful, spiritual. We are apt to think far too lightly of the infinite glory of our Baptism. The outward act is so simple, the means by which this stupendous change is wrought in us possess in themselves so little outward show of power or

efficacy, that we are led to think that our Baptism was but a little matter. Because little or nothing was done by us, and merely our miserable state in God's Eyes pleaded for us with Him, we are apt to forget that all this is the clearest evidence of the working of God; since it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth Mercy. And God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in His Presence.

Point II. When thus in our Baptism we were made partakers of Christ, and became new creatures, capable of sustaining a heavenly Life, higher, more glorious, and filled with a power, such as our former Nature had lost and forfeited in Adam; then to nourish and invigorate this Life, to repair the injuries which it might contract in its upward struggle with Temptations; as the soul, now feeling its highest destiny, yearns more and more after perfect Union with God, our only Peace, and Rest, and Joy, our Blessed Lord has provided the blessed Sacrament of the Altar. Herein our souls are strengthened and refreshed, our body is made clean by His Body, and our soul washed through His most precious Blood. More and more is the fulness of Life infused into our soul, as with ever-growing Faith we draw near and devoutly receive our Lord. His Flesh is meat indeed and His Blood is drink indeed. And as in

nature, so in Grace. When we approach our food with that natural desire which we call appetite, the food which we take refreshes and invigorates us in the most perfect manner. So when we approach the blessed Sacrament with abundant Faith, and intense longing desire begotten of that Faith, then do all the Blessings, which are hidden in Him, pour themselves lovingly and abundantly into our souls. The Body of CHRIST becomes in us the Fulness of power to resist temptations, and to grow in holiness and righteousness before Him. It is in us the life-giving power of a Resurrection, not only lifting up and giving true Life to soul and spirit, but infusing into our mortal bodies the power of immortality. Since it is especially through our constant reception of this blessed Sacrament that we look ourselves for the Resurrection of the Flesh, and the Life of the World to come; as our LORD has taught us, saying, "Whoso eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath eternal Life; and I will raise him up at the Last Day. If any man eat of this Bread he shall live for ever."

Point III. And as Holy Scripture speaks of especial spiritual effects arising from our participation of the Body of CHRIST, so also special spiritual effects flow from our participation of the Blood of CHRIST. By His Blood we have Redemption, by It He hath purchased His Church; the Blood of CHRIST cleanseth us from all sin, so that we read of the Blessed, that they have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the LAMB. As sin is the sickness of the soul, the precious Blood of CHRIST is our medicine, healing our wounded spirit. Thus whilst

the Body of Christ preserves and increases in us the vigour of eternal Life, the Blood of Christ repairs the continual wounds which we receive in our conflict with the powers of evil, and heals all the sickness and all the diseases which our souls contract from the contagion of sin.

With what love, with what gratitude, with what fervour, with what heartfelt contrition and hatred of sin, with what earnest longing after holiness ought we to approach Thee, O Lord Jesus, to receive from Thine Hands Thy most Sacred Body and Blood. Grant that we may ever so approach Thy most holy Mysteries, that we may gain health and refreshment to our souls, pardon and cleansing from all our sins, and strength to walk before Thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of our Life.

Point IV. But there is a still further and higher Blessing resulting from our Partaking of Christ. "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood dwelleth in Me and I in him." Our spiritual Life ariseth not merely from the Power, the Gift, and the Presence of God with us, but from a far more awful nearness to Him. "I live," saith the Apostle, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." So that our whole true spiritual Life is the Life of Christ in us, forming each individual Member of His Body into His own Likeness; filling each, in that measure and capacity which is indicated by the greatness and extent of Faith, with that Righteousness, Holiness, Love, and Joy which in Him exist in the abundance of absolute perfection. And as in the natural body the blood is the life, and life in itself is gladness, so the Blood of

CHRIST in each of His Members is not only Life but Joy. As It flows more and more freely, being less and less restrained by the presence of sin, It fills the soul more and more with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory, and with sweetest Peace, and Rest, and spiritual Gladness. Hence the Chalice of His Blood is spoken of in prophecy as the Cup of Salvation and Gladness, infinitely refreshing in the midst of the dark valley of the shadow of death, and filling us with sober confidence in Him, Who dwelleth in us, Who will never leave us nor forsake us. "Thou shalt prepare a Table before me against them that trouble me; Thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my cup shall be full. But Thy loving-kindness and Mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the House of the LORD for ever."

Point V. But the Presence of CHRIST in us confers a further Gift. CHRIST in you is the Hope of Glory. All the bright hopes which animate us in our struggles in this world, have their only true foundation in the Presence of CHRIST in us. For since our hopes are summed up in this, that "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is;" it can only be that His Likeness will then appear in us, because He Himself is in us. So we ought with the most careful anxiety to cast out of our hearts all things that offend Him, labouring after holiness, righteousness, and charity in His Might and with His Help. And the more frequently we approach Him to draw from Him the Streams of Life and Health, the more perfectly ought we to yield our whole being unto Him, to be fashioned by Him according to His Will.

Happy are we, O Lord Jesus, if we can thus yield ourselves unreservedly to Thee. Pardon, O most Merciful Saviour, all our past unwillingness, all our timid and slothful obedience. Let the Fire of Thy Love enter into our heart, and burn up all the dregs of sin and self-love, that we may be wholly Thine in body, soul, and spirit, now and for ever. Amen.

Meditation V.

THE GREAT BLOODSHEDDING.

In meditating upon our blessed Lord's infinite Mercy in shedding for us His most precious Blood, we must keep in our continual remembrance the great Truth that He Who suffered for us is God over all, blessed for ever. For as we must of necessity look narrowly to His Humanity, since it was as Man that He endured all things, we must be very careful to keep in mind His Divinity, that we may consider all with reverence and godly fear. When we behold Him in His wonderful Humility, made a worm and no man, the scorn of men and the outcast of the people, all the more needful is it that we, His Disciples and His Members, should bow down before Him with the profoundest adoration of our hearts, and acknowledge Him to be the Lord.

The occasions upon which He shed His most precious Blood may be conveniently arranged under five heads, viz., at His Circumcision, His Agony, His

Sufferings under Pontius Pilate, His Crucifixion, and after His Death.

Point I. When our LORD was eight days old He was made obedient unto the Law for man, and in the rite of Circumcision began to shed that most holy Blood, which at the last He was about to pour out to the very last drop upon the cross for us. Consider well what obedience means; that it implies the most complete submission of ourselves to the will of GOD; and that the motive which will make our obedience cheerful, patient, and perfect, is love. Let us ask ourselves what is the character of our obedience to the Law of GOD, whether it is hard, hesitating, unwilling? or whether the Spirit of Love so rules our hearts that we obey readily and submit cheerfully to all the holy Will of GOD? When our Blessed LORD first shed His most precious Blood, His Name was called JESUS, GOD our SAVIOUR. So if we are to be of the number of the Saved, His true people, who bear His Image in everything, we must take cheerfully all the sorrowful dispensations of His Hand, by which He cuts away from us the desires of the flesh and of the mind, which would hinder our perfection. In Him was no sin, yet the Apostle says, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered; since it is only through pain and suffering that patience can be exhibited. So our obedience to be perfect must not only be the ready performance of all the duties which arise from GOD's holy Commandments, but the cheerful submission to all the sorrows and troubles by which GOD teaches us patience and disciplines our souls. We must learn patience, even when the cause of our

sufferings is hidden from us, feeling assured that the Hand of the LORD is there, working for our good.

Point II. When we come to contemplate our Blessed LORD'S Agony and Bloody Sweat, all these thoughts come upon us with the most overwhelming force. Since it is of His Agony that the Apostle is especially speaking, when he says, that our LORD learned obedience by the things that He suffered. Oh wonderful obedience, by which the world has been saved! oh wonderful obedience which led the LORD into the oil-press of Gethsemane, there to endure the infinite weight and the infinite Sorrow of all the sins of mankind. For the LORD hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. Look with trembling reverence at His Form cast down prostrate on the ground. There He endures an agony infinitely beyond the power of mortal man to bear; an Agony only to be sustained by the Almighty power of GOD. Oh, wonderful mystery and wonderful Love! GOD sheds from His Divine Brow His Sacred Blood, that the burden of our sins might be taken away, that we in Him might serve GOD with a free heart and a happy spirit. Can we any longer live in sin, can we any longer be careless about sin, when we behold our loving SAVIOUR crushed down to the earth under the weight of our sins? Can we any longer refuse Him the most devoted service of body, soul, and spirit throughout our lives, Who for our sakes has poured out His Blood upon earth?

Point III. From henceforth throughout our LORD'S passion each step adds one degree more of suffering,

from the malice of devils and the weakness and wickedness of men. The soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it upon His Head, and struck Him on the Head with a reed. And Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him. He endured not only the sharp, agonizing pain of these two fearful cruelties, but that which is even harder to bear than bodily pain, the wanton insults, the horrible mockeries, the rude brutality of the unfeeling soldiers, without a word or glance of sympathy or comfort from any one. It was for us men and for our salvation, to atone for our sins of pride and vanity, our slothfulness and sinful love of ease. Stripes are the portion of the disobedient, and for our sakes the obedient Son of God endured them.

We had put our head under the heel of the ruler of darkness, the prince of this world; and our King was willing to be crowned with thorns, and to shed from His Head fresh streams of Blood, that we might be delivered. Thorns were the symbol of the primeval curse. He took the symbol in its most dreadful form, became a curse for us, and set us free. Oh cruel sin of vanity and self-conceit! which pressed into the Brows of the meek and gentle Saviour the thorny crown. Oh woeful sin of sloth and self-indulgence! which ploughed upon His Back and made long furrows. O Lord Jesus, how great is Thy Mercy and how great is Thy Love, Who willedst to bear the curse that we might obtain a blessing from on High; Who willedst to bear the stripes which were due to us, that we might be healed. Enable us, we beseech Thee, to [redacted] away the whole spirit of self-conceit and vanity,

of sloth and self-indulgence, and teach us in simplicity and diligence to follow Thee.

Point IV. Our Lord was obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross. Here He reached the pinnacle of His Sufferings, here He made the Perfection of His Atonement. Step by step He had approached His Crucifixion, and when its six hours of infinite suffering of body, soul, and spirit were ended, and the work of our Redemption was complete, He said, "It is finished," and He bowed His Head and gave up the Ghost.

As it is by His Bloodshedding that we have been redeemed from the hand of the enemy, the blows of the hammer which drove the nails through His tender and quivering Flesh, only moved His Compassionate Heart to exclaim, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And only one word, and that word uttered that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, when all else was done, and He said, "I thirst," exhibits the infinite distress which He was enduring from the effusion of Blood. As the Psalmist foretold, speaking in His person, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my gums." "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me."

Behold and see, lift up your eyes and consider, the Son of God is pierced through His Hands, that He may atone for all the evil which our hands wrought, and yet He stretcheth out His Hands all the day long unto a disobedient and gainsaying people, that He may bless them, and clasp them to His heart, if

only they will return and repent, and submit themselves unto Him their CREATOR. He is pierced through the feet, and nailed fast to the Cross, because our feet have been swift to run in the ways of evil, and slow and unwilling to walk in the ways of GOD. Oh, let us bow down our hearts before Him, and say, "I will work, O LORD, the works of Righteousness, I will run in the way of Thy Commandments."

Point V. One more step, and the Mystery of our Redemption was complete. As our Blessed LORD hung dead upon the Cross, one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His Side, and forthwith came thereout Blood and Water. And so it was indicated in what way that most precious Blood, which was wholly poured out for our Salvation, should be applied unto our souls. Because our LORD came with Water and Blood, not with water only, but with Water and Blood. And it is the SPIRIT that beareth witness, because the SPIRIT is Truth. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the SPIRIT, and the Water, and the Blood, and these Three agree in one.

O SAVIOUR of the world, Who by Thy Cross and precious Blood hast redeemed us: Save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee.

"Thou only refuge from the heat,
Thou only Rock wherein to hide,
Thou only shade when tempests beat,
The Suffering, the Crucified:
Captain of our Salvation, That couldst be
Made perfect only through Thine Agony.

"My sin is great, my pain is sore,
My strength is gone, my spirit fails;
For me the Cross Thy great Love bore,
For me the Scourge, for me the Nails;
For me the Crown around Thy Temples set,
For me the Agony and Bloody Sweat.

"Oh, while I tread these hard, rough ways,
Ways smooth to Thy ways; lead mine eye
With holy yet with steadfast gaze
Into Thy Passion's Sanctuary;
Thy wounds my cure, my more than trust art Thou,
Hadst Thou not borne them, where had I been now?

"Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst forgive:
Speak the word only, set me free
From *sin*, that so my soul may live,
From suffering, if it pleaseth Thee;
Or make Thou here whate'er Thou wilt my part.
If once I may but see Thee as Thou art!"[1]

Meditation VI.

THE DANGER OF IRREVERENCE TOWARDS THE MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD.

The nearer we are brought to God, either in thought and meditation, or in the more perfect nearness of the Spirit, the greater ought our care to be to speak, to think, and to behave with the most perfect reverence. God's tenderness and condescension towards us should only serve to deepen our feelings of holy awe. No familiarity with Him can ever be endurable, if we forget the unspeakable Glory of His Majesty and Power.

[1] Neale's Hymns for the Sick, VI.

GOD is in Heaven and thou upon earth. The infinite pitifulness of GOD in His Incarnation and Atonement, shedding as He did with a Divine Liberality all His most precious Blood for us, demands of us therefore the spirit of care and earnestness, of devotion and of religious fear, that in contemplating and in making our own, these stupendous works of GOD, we may do so to His Glory and to our own Salvation.

Point I. If we had been spectators of the awful events of our LORD'S Passion, knowing and believing what we now do, our hearts would have been thrilled through and through with horror to behold with what unconscious profanity those who were rending our LORD'S most Sacred Flesh, were also trampling His most precious Blood beneath their feet. Gentile soldiers in the Hall of Pilate, the rude multitude in the streets of Jerusalem, the chief priests at the foot of the Cross, heedless of what they were doing, all conspired to heap upon that Redeeming Stream the utmost insult. It is true that they knew not what they did, and they only thought that they were getting rid of an innocent MAN, who was troublesome to them. But though this ignorance might have opened to them a door of repentance, it does not alter the Fact itself, that they were trampling under foot the Blood of CHRIST, the SON of GOD. So awful is this act, that our minds shrink from the contemplation of it. Yet it is well for a moment to ponder deeply upon it, and to let our hearts be filled with the natural horror which the sight inspires. Oh saving stream of Blood to be thus ruthlessly despised; how great was *the pity, the gentleness*, the compassion, the loving

yearning for our Salvation in the heart of JESUS! Who was willing thus to be set at nought, to permit His most Holy Blood to be trampled in the dust, that those whom sin had brought down to the very dust might be delivered.

Point II. But whilst we ponder with amazement and horror at this act of the unbelieving persecutors of our LORD, we must remember that the Apostle has warned us that it is possible for Christians who have been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly Gift, to trample under foot the SON of GOD, and to count the Blood of the Covenant wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing, and to do despite unto the SPIRIT of Grace. Is it not well to enter into our hearts, to consider well our lives, and examine carefully whether there have been any acts, any words, any thoughts which have tended to this evil result? Men do not become either great saints or great sinners in a moment. Grievous sin and horrible profanity are only the results of long-continued lesser sins and acts of less grievous irreverence. Every sin of carelessness leads on at last to sins that are wilful and determined. So the blasphemer of GOD may trace the beginnings of his sin to irreverent uses of the most holy NAME, or to irreverent behaviour when in Church. Now as the Blood of CHRIST is applied to our souls especially in the two great Sacraments of Baptism and the holy Eucharist, we must carefully examine in what way we have looked upon and treated those two great Mysteries.

Point III. Since Holy Baptism applies to our souls *the precious* Blood of CHRIST, which cleanseth us

from all sin, and we are therein also buried with CHRIST and raised up again in Him and with Him to newness of life; every wilful sin that we have committed since our Baptism has been an insult to, perhaps a trampling upon, that most precious Blood. Yet how little do we realize this. We go on heedless, like the Roman soldiers, or the maddened Jewish crowd. And those who have been made partakers of light, and knowledge, and have known the wondrousness of GOD'S Love and the power of His Grace, add sin to sin. Let us confess our sins, and diligently strive, by His help, to live more carefully, to live more reverently and recollectedly. Out of our blessed LORD'S pierced side came water and blood, which have flowed into our souls in our Baptism; are we not under greater condemnation than those who pierced Him, if *we* have trampled this Blood under foot? Lift up your eyes unto Him, and behold those sacred streams flowing forth; streams of infinitely more value than the four streams of Paradise, for they are streams of Pardon, of Purification, of Life, and of Love. Oh, LORD JESUS, how many insults have we offered to Thy Most Sacred Blood. Merciful SAVIOUR, by that very Blood pardon our transgressions, in the pitifulness of Thy Great Mercy.

Point IV. In a similar way may we look upon the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, wherein we approach even nearer still to the most precious Blood of CHRIST; where It not only bathes our souls, and cleanses them from sin, but It enters into us, so that *It touches, refines,* and gives life to body, soul, and *spirit. How* elevated and spiritual ought all our

thoughts to be respecting that most blessed presence of the Blood of CHRIST. How devout and earnest our preparation to receive it: how careful our lives afterwards. To have tasted of the heavenly Gift, to have been brought so near unto JESUS our LORD, and into so perfect a union with Him, that His Blood has entered into our very bodies, and the stream of eternal Life passes now through us, and we are very members incorporate of His Mystical Body, demands of us the utmost care and diligence to live the life of the Spirit. We have been raised to such a height of Grace, we have been partakers of such an infinity of Love, that CHRIST liveth in us, and the Life, which we now live we live by Faith in the SON of GOD, Who loved us, and gave Himself for us. Who can contemplate without horror any wilful sin and insult to that precious Blood, whereof we are partakers? To approach the Blessed Sacrament in Faith and Love is full of the supremest blessedness and joy: but to make a sacrilegious communion, or wilfully to break away from CHRIST to follow self, or sin, or the world, is a thing most horrible. May He Who liveth and abideth in us, add to us this Grace also, that we may never fall away from Him, but as the Stream of Life floweth more and more fully through our souls, our hearts may become more and more perfectly given up to Him, that all the deadness of the old Adam may pass away, and all the living power of the NEW ADAM may abide in us, filling us with holiness, righteousness, patience, and charity, and preparing us in body, soul, and spirit for His Perfect and Eternal Indwelling in the *Kingdom of* GOD and of His Saints.

O SAVIOUR of the World, Who by Thy Cross and Thy most precious Blood hast redeemed us; save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O LORD.

MEDITATION VII.

THE JOY OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE.

THERE is no true Joy or Gladness but in GOD. For as He is the very essential Life Itself, alone Self-existing, but giving Life according to the good pleasure of His will to everything that possesses life, so is He essentially Joy Itself, the Cause and the Giver of all the Joy and Gladness which His creatures know. Even those lower joys and pleasures, which carnal men think to be the perfection of happiness, are His Gifts; and are only evil because men abuse them and employ them to shut out from their eyes and hearts the CREATOR of these things, in Whose presence is the fulness of joy, and at whose Right Hand there is pleasure for evermore.

Point I. It is sin, and sin only, that hinders the manifestation of the Gladness of GOD to our soul. It builds up a barrier between us and Him, which shuts out GOD'S Presence more and more, and with GOD'S Presence all joy and peace. Hence we may see the infinite misery of the lost, that there is to them no possibility of joy, and pleasure, and peace, because they are finally and completely separated from GOD. Hence, too, we may see why perfect joy, peace, and rest *are impossible in this* world; since however careful

and earnest our strife with sin, and our labour after perfect holiness and purity of heart may be, sin cleaves to us to our dying hour. For if in God's sight the heavens are not clean, and He chargeth even His Angels with folly, how much more man, that is a worm, and the son of man, that is a worm. Yet the reign of God's Holy Spirit in our hearts is to overcome the dominion of sin, and to remove one after another all those hindrances which prevent us from beholding the Presence of God. So some of the very fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, and peace. This Joy He effecteth not only by the Blessedness of His own Indwelling, but also by the application of the Blood of Christ into our souls. As there is no pardon but through the Precious Blood, each time that cleansing stream touches our soul, and our iniquity is taken away, and our sin purged, we may gain a glimpse of that ineffable glory and joy which are in God.

And according to the intensity of our Faith and the depth of our contrition, the Face of Jesus is revealed to our spirit, and we know for one short moment what is meant by the Joy of His Countenance, which the blessed Saints and Angels will behold in Its unveiled and perfect Beauty, even for ever and ever.

Point II. But this joy in Christ's Presence is not vouchsafed to us in its rapturous fulness many times in this life. Though there have been saints whose souls were so devoted to God, and their Love of Christ, and the souls for whom He died was so intense, that they were visited with the abundance of His heavenly consolations; there have also been saints to whom *these raptures* were denied, and who with the utmost

humility, patience, and diligence served GOD in dryness of spirit; exhibiting to GOD a love, all the more perfect because there was little more to reward them than that abiding peace, which is the sure heritage of those who truly love and serve Him. Our work here is not to labour after joy (though GOD may give it to us of His unbounded and liberal Loving-kindness) but our work is to labour after righteousness, obedience, holiness, and patience, that the Will of GOD may be done in us and by us. Then, though we must bear the Cross, our life will have an under-current of spiritual gladness and Joy in the HOLY GHOST; in the very midst of the sorrows which we have in our hearts, His comforts will refresh our soul. And this state of peaceful joy will be progressive; being more and more freed from the hindrances which break into our joy, and at the same time growing higher and higher, as the Presence of CHRIST fills our souls more and more, and makes us more and more conformed to the perfect will of GOD.

Point III. This our joy in CHRIST comes to us especially through the two great Sacraments. We were redeemed by the Precious Blood of CHRIST; for He loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own Blood. And the Salvation, Redemption, Life, and Freedom, the Glad Tidings of which form the Gospel Message, became our own. So our Baptism is in very truth not only a cause of gladness in the contemplation of GOD'S Mercy towards us, but the actual conveyance of the power of Gladness into our souls. We are made partakers not only of CHRIST'S Death, but of His Resurrection also, its power and Joy. The

Source of all joy dwelleth in our souls, therefore we can rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of our Faith, even the salvation of our souls. But when that Life, which was then begun in us, has been nourished and strengthened, first with the sincere milk of the Word, and afterwards with the true Bread, which cometh down from Heaven, our soul begins to find in the Cup of Salvation the inexpressible gladness of CHRIST'S Presence, and we say with the Psalmist, "Oh taste and see that the LORD is gracious, blessed is the man that trusteth in Him." "Oh how sweet is Thy Spirit, O LORD, Who that Thou mightest show Thy kindness unto Thy children, giving them most Sweet Bread from Heaven, fillest the hungry with good things, and sendest the rich empty away."[1]

Point IV. This our Joy in CHRIST is a pledge and foretaste of future Blessedness, and it is the special operation of the HOLY GHOST, by Whom not only is the Love of GOD shed abroad in our hearts, but Joy also. In hope, and also in its foretaste, it is a participation of the joy of the elect Angels. Yet their joy can scarcely be so intense and rapturous as the gladness of the Saints, who have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the LAMB: whose joy also will be raised to its perfection, not only in consequence of the Indwelling of CHRIST in each one, but also because they are thus bound together into one perfect Brotherhood in Him before GOD our FATHER. This Gladness also even now belongs to us, though like other sources of joy, it is broken into and

[1] Priest's Prayer Book, page 17.

sadly hindered by our many sins, frailties, and imperfections. For in our Baptism, being all knit into one Body, we have also been made to drink into one SPIRIT. Individually and collectively the Blood of CHRIST is our Life, the Source of our Holiness, Devotion, Love, Joy, to the whole Church in earth and in paradise. So It conveys not only the super-celestial Joy of CHRIST to His Elect, but, if we may venture so to think, the Joy of the elect to one another. It produces and it intensifies their spiritual sympathies, since they are not only united unto CHRIST, their Head, by His Indwelling, and by their love towards Him, but they are knit together in Him in one communion and fellowship. So we devoutly thank GOD that He has vouchsafed to feed us with the most precious Body and Blood of His SON our SAVIOUR, JESUS CHRIST, and doth assure us thereby of His Favour and Goodness towards us; and that we are very members incorporate in the mystical Body of CHRIST, which is the blessed company of all the Faithful. Thus the Cup of Joy, which He bestows upon us, runneth over. In the infinity of His Love towards us, He was willing to drink that Cup of Sorrow which caused His sweat to be as it were great drops of Blood falling down to the ground in order that through the very chalice of His Precious Blood He might fill us with the Joy of Heaven, through the Power of His Resurrection. Oh mighty and Divine Exchange! LORD JESUS, make our hearts Thine own, and enable us to give unto Thee a fervent and a devoted Love, like that amazing *Love which* Thou hast showed unto us.

V. Because CHRIST dwelleth in us, His Blood

not only purifies our souls from sin, is our Redemption from the powers of evil, our Gladness, because thereby we can enter the Holiest place with Boldness, but It also is the Cause of our Victory and triumph over Satan himself. As in the very shedding of His Blood our Lord overcame principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in His Cross, so His blessed Saints sing with joy, with a loud voice in Heaven, saying, "Now is come Salvation, and Strength, and the Kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ; for the Accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the Blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death."

So every time we make a devout and faithful Communion we gain Strength from the Side of Christ, Who in His Death gave us Life, in His weakness gave us strength, in order that we may in His Power gain the victory, and triumph over sin, the world, and the Devil.

Oh, Lord Jesus, have mercy upon us. Feed us with the heavenly refreshment of Thy most blessed Body and Blood; and in Thy loving-kindness and pity grant that we may ever approach these holy Mysteries with fulness of Faith, earnestness of contrition, and devout Love to Thee. Oh knit our hearts more and more to Thee, that we may fear Thy Name, and rejoice in Thy Love and Thy Mercy for evermore. Amen.

The Example of Christ.

MEDITATION VIII.

OUR LORD'S EXAMPLE OF HUMILITY.

WHEN we set ourselves to meditate upon the Example of our Blessed LORD, it must be with the honest desire and intention of following it to the very utmost of our power. He has given us an example not merely to admire with devout wonder, but to imitate; and imitating, to grow up into the Likeness of the Second Adam. For as the first Adam has impressed his character upon his children and descendants, and the end thereof is death, so the children of the Second Adam must not only put off the old Adam but put on the New, and the Likeness of the Second Adam must be apparent in us all, in order that we may attain unto eternal Life. As the children of the Fall became subject to him, whose sin in the beginning was pride, so the children of the Redemption must be followers and subjects of Him, Who redeemed us by His Humility; Who, being in the Form of GOD, thought it not robbery to be equal with GOD, *but emptied* Himself and took upon Him the form of *a Servant, and was* made in the likeness of men; and

being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the Death of the Cross.

Point I. The most stupendous step in our Lord's Humiliation was His Incarnation. Consider what it is for God to join Himself to man, to become One with man, to take man's nature upon Him, so as in our nature to be born, to live, to die, to rise again, to ascend into Heaven. So great is this act of Humiliation, that the Apostle makes use of the strongest expression he can find, and says, that the Son of God *emptied* Himself. Though He did not and could not cease to be God, yet to such a depth had He descended, that He appeared only to be Man. In this manner He has showed to us the unutterable grandeur of Humility and the corresponding baseness of Pride, and how frightful is the work of Pride, since it needed the Humiliation of God in order to atone for our sin in this respect. Consequently, if the pride of our heart is not eradicated, the punishment which must follow will be terrible indeed. Yet men cannot think that pride in all its forms is so evil. In its grosser forms they abhor it; but in those forms which are of a more secret nature, which do not provoke the observation of men, nor seem to show themselves as evil as they really are, men are very apt to make excuses for themselves, and to close their eyes to the real sinfulness of pride, whatever shape it may assume.

Let us seriously reflect how far the spirit of pride rules in our hearts. This we shall most readily ascertain by asking ourselves whether we are thoroughly *desirous* of becoming perfectly humble. Though we

may be convinced, in a kind of general way, that pride is horrible, yet we are far too slow to perceive the excellency, the glory, the perfection, the blessedness of true humility. Yet that humility has all these characters, the Humility of GOD at once makes manifest. Let us reflect upon this, and offer our hearts to GOD, that He may lead them into the ways of true Humility, according unto His most gracious Will, in the full assurance that though the way may be difficult and painful, the end is Happiness and Glory unspeakable; when they who have humbled themselves under the mighty Hand of GOD are exalted by Him in due time.

Point II. The greatest encouragement to do this is the contemplation of our LORD'S Humiliation as Man. His Humiliation as GOD, though it stamps Humility with a Divine Impress, might seem to put Humility out of our reach. It is too vast, too great, too stupendous. But we can imitate our LORD'S Humility as Man. Although its perfection may be past our attainment, we feel that we can follow at a distance. The circumstances of His Life are like the circumstances of our life, more or less, even though we are not called to follow Him into the perfection of His Humiliation. When GOD had become Man, consider the Humiliations of His Birth, the poverty of His Mother, the inhospitality of His countrymen, the place and circumstances of His Birth. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

Though He was the KING of Israel, the MESSIAH, the DESIRE of all nations, the HEAD of every man, the BEGINNING of the New Creation of GOD, "He

made Himself of no reputation, but took upon Him the form of a servant." When we humble ourselves, we are apt to desire some compensation. We do not like to suffer and to get no credit for our sufferings, we hope for some pity or some praise of men. But in His Humiliation He made Himself of no reputation. So, for thirty years He lived in obscurity, dressed in the poorest clothing, occupied in a trade[1] which drew upon Him no man's special attention, appearing only like any other man, waiting God's time for the work that was before Him, not regretting or repining at the apparent loss of thirty years, nor chafing at the delay of that upon which His whole soul was bent,—the Salvation of mankind by the Sacrifice of Himself.

Now, how often do we hinder the work of humility by our impatience, by our over-eagerness about those things which seem to us desirable and good, by our fretfulness and despondency when our plans fail, or our hopes are delayed; or again, by our uneasiness in our present condition of life, our discontentedness, our unwillingness to submit patiently to a low estate, poor fare, humble clothing, and a name unknown, perhaps even despised by other men. Yet such were the humiliations which our blessed Lord accepted, that we might see that these are the very means by which we may learn like Him to be lowly of heart.

Point III. For our Lord's Humility was not the external humility only of submitting to circumstances; but it was the humility of the heart, the acceptance of those circumstances willingly and freely. As Pride is

[1] Making ploughs and yokes for oxen.—S. Justin M.

the assertion of self, so Humility is the conquest of self; and our blessed LORD showed us the most perfect example, when at the time that our sins were so heavy upon Him, that His Sweat was as it were great drops of Blood falling to the ground, and He prayed that if it were possible that Cup might pass from Him, He said, "Nevertheless not My will, but Thine be done." Our humility must therefore be hearty, willing, cheerful, unreserved. We must yield ourselves without misgiving to the Holy Will of GOD, that we may learn perfection. "Are there not many people who are humiliated, who yet are not humble?"[1] who resist the humiliation, refuse to learn the lesson, even learn pride, and support themselves thereby under their humiliations, thinking all the while that in so doing they are clever? For humiliations are received by men in three ways. Some men are filled with sorrow and vexation, others take them patiently, others accept them freely. "The first are guilty of sin, the second are innocent, but the third are righteous." Therefore our blessed LORD, Who is our Righteousness, and Who came to give us an Example of perfect Righteousness, not only submitted patiently, but freely and willingly to all the indignities, humiliations, and sorrows with which wicked men assailed Him, even to that which summed up all in woefulness and horror, —the Shame of the Cross.

Point IV. Let us now consider with ourselves how far we, who profess to be the Disciples of JESUS, have learnt in His school. How many steps forward have *we* taken in the way of Humility? How much have

[1] *S. Bernard.* Serm. in Cant. xxxiv. 3.

we been able, by the grace of God, to eradicate from our hearts of the spirit of pride and self-seeking, which is so natural to every man? As the Tree of Life beareth twelve manner of fruits, which are for the healing of the nations, so the tree of pride, which destroys men's souls by its poison, has also twelve manner of fruits, each one more deadly than the one which precedes it, and all to be avoided with the most anxious spiritual care. "The first of these fruits is Curiosity, or the desire of knowing that which is forbidden; the second, Levity of mind and want of seriousness; the third, Vain-gladness; the fourth, Boasting; the fifth, Singularity, or the desire of drawing upon ourselves the notice of others; the sixth, Arrogancy and contempt of others; the seventh, Presumption; the eighth, Defending ourselves when we have sinned, and refusing to confess our sins; the ninth, Feigned and false Confessions; the tenth, Rebellion; the eleventh, Freedom in sinning, and sinning without fear of God; the last, Habitual sin."[1] Before we can make a step forwards in the way of perfect Humility, these faults of pride must be fought against. And in fighting against them we shall be turning our desires towards Humility; which indeed is nothing else but the acknowledgment of the perfect Truth as respects ourselves. God is the God of truth, therefore does He love humility in us; so also one part of the offensiveness of pride is its essential untruthfulness. It is the sin of the father of lies.

Point V. Therefore the next point at which we arrive is this, to know what we are really; not what we

[1] S. Bernard de Grad. Humil. x.—xxi.

are in the eyes of other men, who cannot possibly estimate us at our true value, for they see only that which is outside, they judge only from partial observations, they are misled by prejudice, by affection, by love, by hatred, and by a hundred different motives. Nor again, what we are in our own eyes; for we are always inclined to think and to hope too well of ourselves, to magnify our virtues and good works, to think our faults less serious than they are, to conceal from ourselves the hollowness of that which is seemingly good, to look at the best side, to slur over, or put out of sight our worst side. But if our desire is to be really humble, we must try to see ourselves as we really are, that is, as GOD sees us. We must therefore examine ourselves in His Presence, entreating Him to make known unto us what we really are. "Try me, O GOD, and seek the ground of my heart: prove me, and examine my thoughts. Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me; and lead me in the way everlasting."

Point VI. When we have learnt, as far as we are able to know, what we are, (and this knowledge will be progressive, for as our spiritual life increases we shall see with clearer eyes, as our obedience grows more perfect we shall long more completely to live only according to the will of GOD,) then we may take a further step onward in the way of humility; and knowing what we are, may be willing to be taken for what we are. This is indeed a lesson of exceeding difficulty, as it is the destruction of all false self-love, *the tearing* away of all those coverings which are so *hard to part with.* Yet it is a position, which will-

ingly or unwillingly, we must one day occupy, when we stand in the midst of the assembled world, before the Judgment-seat of CHRIST.

O LORD JESUS, give us grace to follow Thee, Who art meek and lowly of heart, even though now Thou art exalted to the Right Hand of the Majesty in Heaven; pour into our hearts the love of Truth, teach us to follow the paths of true and unfeigned Humility, cast out of our hearts the spirit of pride, and deliver us from all those deceits of the Flesh, the Devil, or the World, which would make us think too highly of ourselves. O by Thy wondrous Incarnation, and Thy Humiliation even to the Death of the Cross, LORD JESUS, have mercy upon us.

MEDITATION IX.

OUR LORD'S PATIENCE.

ALTHOUGH in itself patience would almost seem to be a virtue possible only in man, yet there is in the Divine Attributes that, which we, in our weak and human estimate of GOD, can best understand by the term patience. So GOD, condescending to make use of human language to express for our good the manner in which He looks upon us, and the way in which He mercifully deals with us, speaks of Himself as patient and longsuffering towards the sons of men.

Point I. There is nothing more wonderful than the patience of GOD. He waiteth, and waiteth from age to *age, He is* not moved aside from His loving pur-

pose by the waywardness of men. Though men provoke Him to anger every day, He only shows His anger according to the rule of strict Justice. GOD every day continually is blasphemed, His Grace is resisted, His Truth is despised, His Calls are disregarded, His Threatenings are counted for nought, yet He does not hurry. He abstains from interfering until the time that He has predetermined. He judgeth nothing before the time. All this He does, even though men make use of His merciful and pitying patience as an excuse to run into deeper sins, saying, "He hideth away His Face, He will never see it." And when His Saints cry unto Him in their distress, saying, "Hold not Thy tongue, O GOD, keep not still silence, refrain not Thyself, O GOD: for lo! Thine enemies make a murmuring, and they that hate Thee have lift up their head:" they are bidden to wait a little while, to have patience also, until the time is complete. And then our GOD shall come and shall not keep silence; but in His righteousness shall He judge the world, condemning them who despised all His counsel, and would none of His reproof. Therefore let us take heed to ourselves, that we presume not upon the patience and long-suffering of GOD, but labour to serve Him more diligently, obediently, lovingly.

Point II. GOD's Patience is a reason for our patience: in His Life our Blessed LORD has given us the pattern and example of human patience, which it is our duty to imitate. Consider how patiently He dealt with those who were unbelievers. His very knowledge and love of the Truth made it all the more difficult to bear with those who would not believe. Yet how gentle

He was to them, how meek in His answers, how ready to explain when explanation was likely to do good. He knew the world would judge His work by its seeming success or failure, yet He was not disturbed nor moved from the most perfect patience when men turned away from Him immediately after He had bestowed His benefits upon them. He showed indeed how keenly their ingratitude was wounding His most tender and loving Heart, saying to His Disciples, "Will ye also go away?" yet His patience was immovable. When men have a great work to perform, and they gain an adequate conception of its greatness, and their hearts are wholly bent upon the completion of their work, how hard is the trial of their patience when everything seems to go wrong, when they to whom they have done good forsake them, when they whom they have trusted become their enemies, and when the very object upon which they have set their hearts seems to recede more and more: then are they apt to grow very impatient and to throw up their work in disgust and disappointment. What a lesson to us is our Lord's Patience under such circumstances. The higher our aims, the purer our designs, the more liable shall we be to be betrayed into the spirit of impatience, because the circumstances and the persons who stand in our way seem to us to be standing in the way of that which is good, and hindering it from coming to pass. And with a certain amount of self-deception we think that surely we must not be patient when that which is good is set aside. Yet our Lord shows us how to combine the most perfect and unflagging zeal for God and Hi[illegible]

glory with the most absolute self-forgetfulness and perfect patience.

Point III. For our LORD'S Patience did not cause Him to cease from continual efforts to convert men, and to make known the Truth of GOD by which men are converted. When men rejected the Truth, sometimes He repeated it in stronger terms, sometimes He clothed it in the garb of parables, according to the several dispositions of those to whom He was speaking. Where men exhibited the least readiness to hear His Word and to receive instruction, however slow and dull they were in receiving it, He instructed them patiently, gently, and carefully. Consider His treatment of Nicodemus. He might have reproached him with cowardice, because he came to Him under the shelter of night, and yet He treated him with the utmost delicacy and forbearance, patiently explaining those things which Nicodemus did not understand, and so touching his heart with the inexpressible tenderness of His loving courtesy, that the smoking flax was fanned into a blaze, and at our LORD'S Death Nicodemus came with S. Joseph of Arimathea boldly unto Pilate to ask the Body of JESUS.

Now is it not a common fault with zealous Christians to expect other people to see Divine Truths as soon and as readily as they perceive them themselves? We are apt to forget and overlook the difficulties which hinder them from arriving at the same conclusions at which we have arrived. On the other hand, we are apt to feel hurt when other people outstrip us in the readiness of their faith, and we are disposed to look suspiciously at their faith. Now both disposi-

tions arise from want of perfect patience and humility. So again, our patience is tried when those whom we have been trying to influence for good show themselves thoughtless, careless, and apparently quite unmoved by all that we have said or done. Yet if we turn to Scripture we see how thoroughly wrong our impatience is, and how likely to make us cast away, through our want of hopefulness, that which may contain the seeds of very great good. Was it not, (to speak after the manner of men,) trying to God, Who had called David the man after His own heart, to see him fall so terribly and so deeply? Yet it was through the forbearance and patience of God that David arose from the depth of his sin, having through grace learnt even in it the virtue of humility. He became a Saint, and by his words of penitence has refreshed the souls of many a penitent and saint, and given us a proof of the most marvellous kind of the sacred saying, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."[1] Towards all men then let us try to behave with patience, for charity hopeth all things.

Point IV. There is another point in our Lord's Example which we must imitate, namely, His Patience under sufferings. Towards God this was exhibited in the most perfect submission and resignation to His Holy Will; towards men in the most unmoved gentleness, and a desire rising high above all to do good to every man that came near unto Him, whatever the circumstances were which brought him near. So He healed by a miracle the ear of Malchus; He tenderly thought of S. Peter in the midst of His own deep dis-

[1] Comment. on Ps. 51, Neale and Littledale.

tress, and looked at him with a sorrowful yet loving rebuke when he had three times denied Him; He behaved with wonderful tenderness and patient consideration even towards Pilate; He had words of pity for the women who followed Him on the way of sorrows; He prayed for those who were putting Him to death; He converted one of the thieves upon the cross, though he had joined with the other in reviling our LORD. "For when He was reviled He reviled not again, when He suffered He threatened not. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a Lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." So we must learn the duty of silence, and to put away the spirit of murmuring and complaining, of bitterness and irritability. We must always try to see in others that which is best, not that which is worst, to make allowances for their infirmities and ignorances, which often cause them to fail, when they are even trying with all their hearts to do us good. If we find men determined to do us harm, we have always a remedy at hand both against them and for them,—we can pray that GOD would turn their hearts, and make them no longer His enemies and ours.

Point V. But not only have we need to learn patience towards other men, we must also learn patience towards ourselves. When we are trying earnestly to improve, struggling with all our soul against the sin which doth so easily beset us, throwing ourselves heartily and zealously into the work of GOD, we are apt to grow impatient with ourselves on account

of our falls, our weaknesses, our failures, and our slowness in making any apparent progress.* Now though we must be always labouring to advance, we must still be patient with our soul. We must remember that we are fallen creatures, struggling out of our fall, encumbered with its consequences. Therefore we must not be surprised at ourselves, if, when we have been taking especial pains some weak point should suddenly be apparent, the existence of which we never before suspected; nor must we be discouraged thereat. But looking at this as a revelation of the real state of our hearts, an indication of the grievous evil that lies within us, and of the exceeding sinfulness of our hearts, which we are so readily disposed to conceal from ourselves, we should carefully, humbly, and patiently set ourselves to work to remedy the defect. Our very faults and failings will then become the means of our spiritual growth. And in this manner we shall be following the footsteps of the Saints, who made use of their faults to learn patience and humility; attributing all their spiritual growth and advancement to the Grace of God, all their victories to His Mercy. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name be the praise, for Thy loving Mercy, and for Thy Truth's sake."

Unless we are patient with ourselves, and learn to strive against our enemies with that calmness, which is the result of a determined will to overcome, we shall not persevere. We must remember that God will reward our honest and earnest attempts rather than our victories; for what we have attempted shows the working of our will labouring to fulfil His Laws. Vi[illegible]

tories are the gift of His Grace, to GOD therefore do they belong rather than to us. Yet GOD crowneth His own gifts in us. Let us therefore resolve so to persevere in this holy strife that patience may have her perfect work, that we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. Patience leads to perfection; so our blessed LORD, Who Himself was made perfect through sufferings, bids us possess our souls in patience.

O LORD JESUS, most patient and loving SAVIOUR, grant unto us Thy SPIRIT of holy patience. Teach us to follow Thy blessed Example more and more perfectly, that we may not be overcome, nor deceived by any temptations, but may obtain the crown of Everlasting Life, which Thou hast promised to them that overcome. Amen.

MEDITATION X.

THE GENTLENESS OF CHRIST.

THERE is in the manner of our LORD'S treatment of all who came near to Him a wonderful attractiveness. Though in Him there burned the most ardent fire of zeal for the Glory of GOD and the Salvation of men, yet this zeal was balanced with the most perfect Gentleness, it was never displayed at the very slightest sacrifice of Mercy. For in Him, not only in the *Mystery* of the Incarnation, but in the perfection of *the moral virtues*, Mercy and Truth have met together,

Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other. In ordinary men the virtues never exist evenly balanced. Sometimes Zeal predominates, making a man harsh and stern; sometimes Gentleness predominates, making a man feeble. But our Lord being perfect Man, exhibited every virtue perfectly. Whilst we are then meditating upon His perfection in one virtue, we must bear in mind that every other was equally perfect in Him.

Point I. Christ's Pity, whilst it draws us with the cords of a man, with the bands of Love, does not humiliate. Human pity is at times apt to be exasperating, because in our pity we mix something of self; we assume in expressing our pity more or less an air of superiority; so men are apt to resent our pity, to wish that they were not the subjects of it, and consequently do not feel and cannot show themselves grateful for our well-meant kindnesses. But our blessed Lord knew how to show pity and compassion in such a manner as to draw men thereby more and more towards Him. And this was because He felt for them exactly as they were feeling for themselves, and in His perfect Humility and Meekness made them perceive only that which took their hearts captive, His perfect and absolute sympathy. He did not use any words, but such as were to effect the end of consolation. To the widow of Nain He merely said, Weep not, and then raised her son to life. At the grave of Lazarus He preached no sermon on patience, or resignation, or hope; but He wept, and then called Lazarus from the grave. It was His look[1] that went

[1] See S. Ambrose in Lucam. Lib. x. 89.

to the heart of S. Peter, and made him repent so thoroughly for his threefold denial. And surely nothing could more show forth the hardening power of covetousness than that Judas, living in the heavenly atmosphere of our LORD's Gentleness, should have betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver. In following our blessed LORD's example of pitifulness for the sorrows and misfortunes of others, to our pity there must be joined the spirit of meekness and gentleness. In our intercourse with our suffering brother there must be no self-assertion; we must avoid the least shadow of offence, that the good which we are seeking to do may be perfect.

Point II. CHRIST's Gentleness, whilst it was infinitely tender, was tempered with a certain holy severity, which we must strive to imitate, in order to preserve our gentleness from degenerating into weakness and insipidity. This holy severity, at once so awful and yet so attractive, arose from His perfect obedience to GOD. "My Meat and Drink," He says, "are to do the Will of My FATHER, and to finish His Work." The perfection of His Holiness made Him severe towards sin, the perfection of His Love made Him gentle towards the sinner. Yet in dealing with sinners He did not spare for their cry, when He willed to do them good. He, like a wise surgeon dealing with a wounded limb, laid on a Hand at once powerful and tender, and the more powerful because tender, the more tender because powerful. As there are men whose handling of the sick surpasses in delicacy and softness even the touch of *women, from* the very fact of their possessing greater *power; so the* power of Saintliness and the vigour of

holiness make their possessor all the more tender and gentle towards those whom he finds that it is needful to rebuke for sin. Thus Joseph, when his brethren came before him, although his heart was yearning towards them with a love new-kindled to the most ardent flame, refrained himself, and spake harshly to them, did not address them in their own tongue, but spake unto them by an interpreter. He bound Simeon, demanded Benjamin, and sent them away with consciences roused, and memories quickened for the crime which they had committed against him long years ago. This he did, not in the spirit of revenge, but that seeing the very wickedness of their sins, they might be reconciled to him all the more perfectly and fully, and might accept his love and his good offices without fear and without suspicion. At last he makes himself known unto them, and the reconciliation is complete.

Point III. So Christ speaks to us by an interpreter, and we must learn to trust in His perfect Gentleness and Mercy, even when He seems to speak severely, to hide His Face, and our consciences are awakened, our fears are roused, our troubles are increased. The awakening of conscience and the quickening of our spiritual life may cause us more earnestly to long and desire to see His face, and then perhaps He will make Himself strange to us. He will refrain Himself before the soul, keep Himself back as it were with a kind of holy restraint from bestowing upon us the Joy of His Countenance; that being purified and prepared, we may at length behold *His Face nearer*, more brightly, and more completely

beaming with Love towards us. So for a time we think that we have lost Him. We are subjected to bitter mortifications, doubts, discouragements, to losses, to unfair treatment; we are left in obscurity, obliged to submit to severe religious trial and discipline, and made to feel the misery of our sins, either in the shame which springs from the knowledge and consciousness of sin, or from its temporal consequences, which are not taken away, even when the sin itself is washed away and quite forgiven. As it is said of David, "The LORD hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die," nevertheless, "the child that is born unto thee shall surely die." But all this severity arises from the most perfect Love and Pity. When He has taught us what we are, He will return the straight way unto us, and fill us with gladness, sending us on our way rejoicing. Was not this the way in which our blessed LORD dealt with the Samaritan woman? First, He made her know herself, then He permitted her to know Who He was Who was speaking to her. His merciful revelation of Himself could only take place when she truly saw what she was. In a similar manner He dealt with the woman of Canaan; appearing to her hard and severe at first, but when she had stood the test and proof, at last filling her with the riches of His Blessing and the gladness of His commendation.

Point IV. We cannot doubt, from what we read in the holy Gospels, that our blessed LORD'S outward appearance and manner had in itself a marvellous *power over the* hearts of those who saw Him. Men *could not look at* Him unmoved. If the love of sin

was overpowering, they hated Him; if the desire for something better was in the heart, they clung to Him, hung upon His gracious Words, followed Him as He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the Devil. He sees upon the borders of the Lake of Galilee two brethren casting a net into the sea, and He saith unto them, Follow Me. And they straightway leave their nets and follow Him. To Matthew, the publican, He spoke the same words, and he arose, left all, and followed Him. There came one running and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit Eternal Life? Of whom it is said, a little after, that "JESUS beholding him, loved him." In the depth of His Humiliation the heart of Pilate was touched, so that he was constrained to declare Him innocent. And even after His Resurrection so wonderful was His Influence over the two disciples, who were going to Emmaus, and knew not that JESUS Himself was their Companion; that when He would have gone further, they constrained Him, saying, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them."

Whence comes all this strange influence of our blessed LORD over men, who as yet knew not His Divine Nature, but because they saw in Him a mingled gentleness and dignity, a sweetness and severity, a humility and a grandeur, which took their hearts captive, almost in spite of themselves. In a thousand different ways, and to every one who came near Him, He exhibited the glorious perfection of that virtue *which we call* courteousness. A virtue which is but

form of true charity and of obedience to the Royal Law, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Our LORD'S Courteousness and Gentleness are the very opposite to the sin of envy, which, caring only for itself, would rob others of the blessings which GOD has been pleased to bestow upon them.

Let us resolve then, through Grace, to flee from this deadly sin, and let us diligently cultivate the spirit of gentleness, courtesy, and Christian pitifulness. All those little harshnesses and angularities of manner which really proceed from defective Charity, and have their source either in a too great conceit of ourselves, or a feebleness of the power of sympathy, which is selfishness, ought to be carefully pruned away. For how much mischief and pain does a harsh and hasty word often produce, or an inconsiderate action, even though they may seem in themselves to be very slight, and spoken or done without any intention whatever of wounding! Still we cannot help knowing from painful experience that such words and actions wound, because though we may ourselves have no hurtful intention, other people are apt to take them in a sense we never thought or intended, and to be hurt or offended thereby. So the remedy is continual watchfulness over our words and actions, and continual prayer for the true Spirit of Gentleness and Holy Love.

Oh, may our LORD JESUS CHRIST, our gentle and holy SAVIOUR, ever abide in us, and strengthen us continually, that we may indeed destroy the old man, and put on more and more the New Man in gentleness and true courtesy; that we may not only be our-

selves made like unto the Lord, but partaking of His Spirit, and exhibiting in our own selves His Divine Indwelling, others also may be drawn by our means to run unto Him, to cling unto Him, to serve Him, to give up heart, and soul, and all to Him Whose Name is as ointment poured forth, and Who is altogether lovely.

Meditation XI.

The Purity of Christ.

Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ. Now purity of heart is the result of Grace, the work of the Holy Spirit. Purity of heart differs from innocence, and is more perfect. For innocence is, or may be, only ignorance of evil; but purity of heart is the absence of evil in a heart that has been tempted. Now our blessed Lord was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. In Him was no sin. In Him was perfect and absolute Purity.

Point I. God gave not the Spirit by measure unto Him. He was the most glorious Temple of the Most High, in which God the Holy Ghost dwelt absolutely, completely, universally. In our Blessed Lord's Human Nature there was no part which was not completely submitted to the Holy Spirit of God; the innermost motions of His Human Spirit, the thoughts and operations of His intellectual Soul, and all the inclinations of His Flesh were governed by the Will of the Holy Spirit. Therefore there was no stain or

spot of sin in Him. To Him all sin naturally appeared, as it is, most horrible. And if Lot of old, imperfect and faulty as he was, dwelling in Sodom, vexed his righteous soul with their ungodly deeds, what must the suffering have been to our blessed LORD, infinitely pure and infinitely sensitive against impurity, to have dwelt amidst that adulterous and sinful generation; and with that marvellous Love, which made Him forget Himself for the Salvation of sinners, even so far to mix with them as to be called the Friend of publicans and sinners. We know how painful and distressing to us it is to hear a word or expression of doubtful propriety, how we wish that the person had never uttered it, how hard it is to escape from its influence, how difficult to cleanse our hearts from its horribleness. Yet because He loved us, and willed to draw sinners out of the depths of evil, our LORD endured the society of those whose words, even inadvertently spoken, must have caused Him the most cruel anguish, and shame, and distress of soul. On the other hand, conceive the terrible condition of those men, who in His Presence said things which they ought not. Oh! if they had known that they were saying them in the presence of Him Who will judge the quick and the dead, in the presence of GOD, Who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins, what anguish of heart, what terror of conscience would have seized upon them! Yet men do the same things now, and speak the same words in the Presence of GOD!

Point II. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they *shall see GOD.*" Our Blessed LORD in His Human

Nature ever beheld the Countenance of God, as He said unto His Father, I know that Thou hearest Me always. His pure and unspotted Heart opposed no hindrance to the Vision of God. Even when the hour of darkness came, and He said, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" this was only because God had laid upon Him the iniquities of us all, and the shame of these iniquities interfered for a little while with the Sight of God. Oh, what Love to lost mankind that the all-pure and spotless Saviour should be so willing to bear our shame that for a moment He was as it were forsaken of God; that is, He as Man felt the same desolation as if God had really forsaken Him. With what eagerness ought it to inspire us to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness, both of the flesh and spirit, lest we should, even by a single unholy thought, have added to the Desolation of our Lord.

Point III. If we wish to be like Him, to be with Him where He is, to behold with Him and in Him the fair Beauty of the Lord, we must purify ourselves, even as He is pure. The steady contemplation of God and realisation of His holy presence will enkindle in us a strong desire after holiness and purity of heart. And as we, through Grace, learn more and more of this purity, driving out the foul spirit by earnest prayer and supplication, we shall see more and more clearly the Glories of God. We shall see God. He will reveal Himself to our hearts, and we shall know something of the blessedness which will be ours if in God's Mercy we come to the Land of *everlasting Light*. Hence it is that souls who have

given up all to follow CHRIST, virgin souls, who follow the LAMB wherever He goes, gain a deep and marvellous insight into the things belonging to GOD. What they have sacrificed has been restored them in another form a hundred-fold in the abundance of spiritual things. They have mortified the flesh with its affections and lusts, and they have received in the spirit the abundance of peace, and love, and joy in the HOLY GHOST. So also it is when the passions for a time are undisturbed, and a season of peace and quietness comes upon a man, that then spiritual things present themselves to him in a new and attractive light.[1] And even if this peace and quietness of spirit arises only from accidental circumstances, still it is one of the operations of GOD's good Providence, Who thus wonderfully in His Mercy shows to a man encumbered with sin, what joy, gladness, peace, and satisfaction lie within his reach, if only he will stretch forth his hand and lay hold thereof, if only he will struggle with his whole heart against those defiling sins, which are the ruin of both soul and body.

Point IV. Our vision and knowledge of GOD are progressive, both here and hereafter. In this life it is evident that as the mists of sin disappear, the clear Light of Life will be seen by our souls. As we ascend the mountain of holiness, and leave the fogs of the valley, the chilling and debasing sins which hinder the vision of GOD, the sight of the heavens above will become clearer, until we have reached the height of holiness, that purity of heart, by which in the world to come we may see GOD face to Face.

[1] See Acts ix. 31.

But that will not be the end or limit of our knowledge; rather it will be the very true beginning, and in the endless ages to come we shall find the Rest of our souls in the ceaseless contemplation of God. To see God does not merely mean to be vouchsafed a sight of His marvellous Glory, but it means an ever-increasing knowledge of what God is. Here we speak of God and think of God with the exceeding imperfection of human understanding; our thoughts are full of inaccuracies, which arise from the very condition of our being. He who speaks most truly, most wisely, most spiritually, most theologically of God speaks of Him with the weak understanding and stammering lips of a child, for he sees Him but in part, he beholds Him through a glass darkly. But when hereafter we see Him face to Face, then that which is in part shall be done away, that which is dark and dim shall be made light, that which is imperfect shall be filled with the perfection of God.

Point V. Now this Contemplation of God, which is the reward of a purified heart, and that for which God in His Love calls us to purify our heart, that we may arrive at that which He has determined shall alone satisfy our soul, will be the Joy of the soul for ever. Each Attribute of God in its infinity of existence and variableness of manifestation, will form an endless source of wonder and everlasting spring of love, devotion, and gladness in the fulfilment of God's holy will. For as the Joy of Heaven will not consist in a still and motionless contemplation of God, but in activity in fulfilling His Will, the direct result of this contemplation of Him; so all the works of

Heaven will tend to lay open to the wondering soul the deeper things of GOD, mysteries existing in the Divine Nature, as far surpassing our present knowledge of GOD, as this our knowledge of Him surpasses the knowledge which the beasts of the field may perchance have of Him.

Seeing then the glories which are opened to the pure in heart, let us labour with all our might to gain this purity. Let us ever keep in mind that everything that defiles the Temple of GOD is an offence unto Him, an insult to His indwelling SPIRIT. Now, our bodies are the Temples of the HOLY GHOST, Who dwelleth in us, not only to quicken our *spirits*, and to lift them up to the contemplation of GOD, that we may learn to love, obey, honour, worship, and glorify Him, as we ought; not only to enlighten our *minds*, that our reason may be ruled and governed according to the Law of GOD; but also to fit our *bodies* to become the eternal occupiers of the Kingdom of GOD, the spiritualized shrines of a spirit, lifted up into the glory of GOD'S presence, filled with the very fulness of His HOLY SPIRIT. Oh! what earnest striving, then, should there be in us after the perfection of purity; what anxious casting out of all unholy thoughts; what swift and unwearied fleeing from every imagination of the heart which may defile.

LORD JESUS, Thou pure and unspotted SAVIOUR, cleanse our hearts, we pray Thee, from all defilements of sin, and from all the sinful lusts which war against the soul. Make our hearts partake of that love of purity, wherewith Thy Heart, O GOD, was fulfilled. Grant that we may see more and more clearly the ex-

cellence of those things which Thou hast prepared for them that love Thee. Fill our hearts with this Love, make it to sanctify and elevate all the pure love, which Thou hast made our duty and gladness in this life, and purge out all sinful and evil love, that all that we are, all that we have may be wholly Thine, O Lord, sanctified by Thine indwelling, and prepared for Thine everlasting habitation.

Meditation XII.

Our Lord's Example of Temperance.

By Temperance we are to understand not merely freedom from excess in eating and drinking, but from all excess whatever. It is the virtue of self-restraint, the perfect government of all the desires of the flesh and of the mind, the very opposite to the sin of luxury, —which is self-indulgence, exhibited in excessive eating, or drinking, or in too great nicety about what we eat and drink, or in the desire or accumulation of those things which only minister to ease, vanity, or worldly greatness. Its effect upon the soul is gradually to destroy all spirituality: for the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life are not of the Father, but of the world. Now our blessed Lord, unto Whom God gave not the Spirit by measure, as part of the perfect spirituality of His most holy Life, and most complete self-sacrifice, has given us an example of Temperance.

Point I. Consider our LORD'S Temperance in food. When the forty days of His great Fast were ended, at the very moment when the cruel pangs of hunger were making themselves most felt, Satan tempted Him, saying, "Command these stones, that they be made bread." And what was the answer of our blessed LORD? In meekness and in undisturbed calmness He replies, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of GOD." Similar, in after years, was His answer to His Disciples. For when at evening, after a long day's wearying journey, He sat by the well of Samaria, having apparently eaten nothing during the day; His Disciples, who had been into the city to buy meat, prayed Him to eat of that which they had brought: He replied, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." And when they wondered at His words, He said, "My meat is to do the Will of My FATHER, and to finish His work." To give us an example of the most perfect temperance, whilst in His ordinary life He chose such food only as the poorest could procure, He did not avoid the tables of the more wealthy when they invited Him to partake of their hospitality: showing us that true temperance in food does not consist in abstinence from the use of GOD'S creatures, but in making use of them in moderation, for every creature of GOD is good. And though by His perfect moderation in temperance He exposed Himself to the wicked and sarcastic slanders of His enemies, who spoke of Him as a Man gluttonous and wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners; so evidently false was this slander before the eyes of every

man, that these wicked men durst never again repeat it. Even so much as this may we perceive, looking upon our Lord's character from without. But we know that in this it was impossible for Him to sin, for in Him was no sin. Whilst indeed He suffered all the temptations to sin in order that He might succour them that are tempted; yet His human will was so perfectly united to and submitted to the Will of God that sin became impossible.

Point II. Consider next His Temperance in Sleep. How often do we find Him spending the whole night in prayer to God, retiring into the solitude of the mountain or into the Garden of Gethsemane. Once indeed we read that He was asleep on a pillow in the boat, when the storm arose upon the Galilean Lake. But that pillow was not a pillow stuffed with soft down, but made of hard leather. Nay, so marked was His disregard of personal comfort in sleep, that He had not where to lay His Head. When we compare our actions with His most holy Example, do we not find much cause for self-condemnation? Is it not too often the case that the love of ease and rest interferes very seriously with the work of prayer and devotion? If we recognised, as we might do, the glory and blessedness of following Jesus our Lord, would it be so hard a thing to sacrifice a little sleep that we might meet with Him? That He might redeem us, He put away all the comforts of nightly rest, and contented Himself with a lot inferior to that of the beasts and birds: for "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His Head." We are not, it is true, called upon to

imitate Him to this extent, but surely all mere self-indulgence in our sleep, taking more than is necessary for the true rest and refreshment of the body, is an inconsistency in the members of CHRIST. Would it not be well to resolve not to let sleep interfere with the time of our devotions, but always to rise so early in the morning that we may have time reverently and carefully to seek GOD'S Blessing and Guidance during the coming day? And never ought this spirit of sloth to overcome us, when CHRIST makes Himself ready to meet us, and to fill us with the gladness of His Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. Will it not quicken our love to Him and our devotion to His Service to feel that in our approach to Him there, we come in His own Spirit of self-sacrifice; that before He imprints His inward Likeness upon our souls, He has stamped upon our actions the external likeness of His holy Ways. We follow Him, it is true, at a long distance, but indeed we are following Him when we rise a little earlier and go out into the cold that we may be with Him. Oh! what joy to faithful, loving hearts to be like JESUS, and so to feel by sweet experience that He is living in us, and making us acceptable to the FATHER, Who can only behold us with pleasure in proportion as He sees the Image of His only-begotten SON imprinted upon our whole being, body, soul, and spirit.

Point III. Consider in the next place to what miseries the spirit of self-indulgence has brought men. Because Esau could not restrain his appetite, he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage; and afterwards he found no place for repentance, though he sought it

carefully with tears. The people in the wilderness would not be contented with the heavenly food, which God supplied to them daily, but longed after grosser and more abundant food, though the manna was sufficient for every want, and pleased every man's taste, and God as a punishment for their sin granted their request. But while the meat was yet in their mouths the heavy wrath of God came upon them, and slew the wealthiest of them; yea, and smote down the chosen men that were in Israel. "Behold, this was the iniquity of Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters." We see so strongly the enormous evils which arise from intemperate drinking, that we are apt to overlook the fact that gluttony and greediness are just as sinful as drunkenness. Temptations to sin in both these ways lie about us every day; let us resolve to be watchful against all temptations, and choose rather to live simply, plainly, and with the strictest temperance, than by going to the extent of that which is lawful to run the risk of passing beyond the bounds, and sinning. It has been one of the marks of God's Saints to flee from self-indulgence, for thus they felt that they were following our Lord, and imitating His holy Apostle, who says, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."

Point IV. We must remember our position in the scale of God's creatures; that though we possess a body, and a mind in common with the beasts that perish, even these are grander, more glorious, mo[illegible]

excellent, than any that they possess; but we have in addition a spirit, which makes us perfectly different in kind from them. If then we give way to the impulses of our lower nature, and let our appetites rule over us, or even run riot with us, what a mighty fall have we sustained! Nay, the drunkard and the glutton degrade themselves below the beasts, who are satisfied with the food that GOD gives, and never use it to excess. So that in an unregenerate man these sins are utterly at variance with nature and reason. But in us, who have been made the living Temples of the HOLY GHOST, whose bodies have been sanctified by His Indwelling, such sins as these are infinitely evil. "If any man defile the Temple of GOD, him will GOD destroy: for the Temple of GOD is holy, which Temple ye are." Practically we may easily find how self-indulgence destroys spirituality. Partly because it renders the body gross and heavy, and dulls both brain and spirit; and partly because it supplies our affections with an object of sense and of vanity which shuts out the Love of GOD more or less completely. Oh! how happy should we be if we only could fully learn to look upon all the things of this world as things in themselves of the merest indifference, and only as of real value in so far as they help the soul to rise superior to the desires of the flesh, and the spirit to the desires of the mind.

May our blessed LORD JESUS CHRIST help us. May He be within us to strengthen us to live temperately and simply. May He by His HOLY SPIRIT quicken our spirits to set their affections upon things above, and not only to see the value of Heavenly

things, but to embrace them with all our heart. Oh Lord Jesus, subdue in us all the sinful desires of the flesh and spirit. Let us not make Thy dwelling-place an offence unto Thee, to provoke Thee to withdraw Thyself from us. Lord, abide with us. Life is passing, the shadows grow longer, and the night cometh when no man can work. Abide with us, O Lord, it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.

Meditation XIII.

Our Lord's Liberality.

God giveth us richly all things to enjoy. Liberality is in a manner a necessity of God's Nature. That which He has made He loves, and loving with the perfection of Love bestows upon it all the blessedness of which it is capable, with no stinted Hand, but in the richest abundance. He filleth all things living with plenteousness; and where sin is not, maketh that plenteousness to be an ever-increasing spring of joy and gladness. His Forbearance and Long-suffering, what are they but the overflowing Liberality of His Goodness; Who maketh the sun to rise upon the evil and upon the good, and sendeth rain upon the unjust as well as the just? It is because God is perfect Love that His Liberality is thus perfect. Hence it is that covetousness is so contrary to the Divine Mind that He abhorreth the covetous man, since the covetous man narrows his affections to himself, or even to that which is baser than himself, his

money or his pleasures, and so has no room for the exercise of love, which demands and can only be satisfied with self-sacrifice.

Point I. Our blessed LORD'S first act of Liberality was therefore one, which included in itself all others. For His Love to us was so unstinted, that He gave Himself to be a Sacrifice for our sins. He kept nothing back. All that was His He gave unto us. And He gave all to us with a liberality surpassing all conception. It was not the mere bestowal of His riches upon those who were in want. It was the exchange of His Riches for our poverty. He bowed the Heavens and came down; and having come down, He found a lower depth, that those who were sunk into the deepest pit, and most loathsome mire of sin, might be delivered. He became Man: and being Man, He was so marred more than any man, that He was as a worm and no man, a very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people. He took our poverty, and gave us His Riches; He took our shame, and gave us His Glory; He took our sorrow, and gave us His Joy; He took our dead and accursed state, and gave us His Life and Eternal Blessedness. Nay, lest anything should mar the perfection of His Liberality, —He had no house to be born in, no cradle to be rocked in, He was an Exile in His Infancy from His native land, a dweller in youth in the most obscure of provincial villages, labouring at a simple and laborious trade; He was so like other men in the outward circumstances of His Life, that His nearest relations did not believe in Him. And in the days of His Ministry *He had* not where to lay His Head; no, not in His

very Death, except the hard Cross, and the agonizing pillow of the Crown of Thorns. So poor did He make Himself for our sakes, that He submitted to take a far lower position than Barabbas; in the shame of Crucifixion He held the most shameful place, and was numbered among the transgressors, as if He were the chief. This was a liberality of giving inconceivably great, the outflow of a Love beyond all thought.

Point II. In many of the circumstances of His most holy Life His Liberality manifests itself. Those things which He had received from the FATHER He gave unto His Disciples, "I have given unto them," He says, "the words which Thou gavest unto Me, and they have received them." So in sending out His Disciples to preach, and to heal the sick, He says, "Freely ye have received, freely give." Nothing stopped the stream of His Works of Mercy except the unbelief of men. And whithersoever He entered into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought Him, that they might touch, if it were but the border of His garment; and as many as touched Him were made whole." In two miracles especially was His Liberality manifested: in the Miracle of Cana of Galilee, where the six water-pots full of water were turned into good wine, far more than sufficient for that humble wedding-feast, where temperance and holiness were reigning—enough indeed for their wants for many a day to come. And again, in the twice repeated miracle of the loaves, not only was there enough for the vast multitudes, but of the very fragments that remained there were gathered at one time twelve baskets full, at the other seven

When S. Mary Magdalene poured the precious ointment upon His Head, her act was acceptable unto Him for many reasons, and for this clearly among the rest, that it was the gift of a liberal heart which would think nothing too good for His most holy service: a heart therefore that was touched by the same holy influence, which manifested itself perfectly in Him.

Point III. But our Blessed LORD not only showed us a pattern of that active virtue of Liberality, which is the opposite of covetousness, but also of the passive virtue of contentedness, which is also opposed to that deadly sin. The perfect Liberality with which He gave Himself for us is seen in the workshop of Nazareth, in the wilderness of temptation, in the daily weariness of teaching and preaching from place to place, in the nightly absence of all certain shelter, in His humility in deigning to subsist upon the alms of devout people. Nothing would He keep for Himself, all would He give to us; and He was contented that it should be so. Oh, how differently do we His members too often behave! How anxious we are after comforts. How unhappy when they are denied us. Weariness, temptation, humiliations, sleeplessness, sickness, poverty, loneliness affright us, we cannot bear them, we feel as if we were hardly dealt with. We murmur, complain, are discontented. Yet in enduring these, or any of these, we may show how the free SPIRIT of GOD rules our hearts, and disposes us to yield ourselves cheerfully and liberally to GOD.

Point IV. Consider that perfect contentedness is complete submission to the Will of GOD; it is the repose of the soul resting upon the sure promises of

God, in perfect Faith and confidence, that no good thing will He withhold from them that live a godly life. God will provide, for He has promised, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." So that all covetousness and discontent are a faithless distrust of God. Their evil, therefore, is in their very beginning, as well as in that terrible end, when the thing which we have coveted occupies and fills our heart, and thrusts out God, our Joy, and our Life. Hence our blessed Lord, in His infinite contentedness, could say to us, "Come unto Me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Yet how often do we weary ourselves for very vanity, making a toil and trouble of our whole life to gain that which satisfieth not; and pass by the loving Saviour, and turn away our ears from hearing His Voice, because the Cross is marked upon everything that is His, and if we are His it must be marked upon us; if our works are His, our life is His, and our hope is in Him, they too must bear the mark of the Cross. And this mark of the Cross is certainly in one thing, liberality in self-sacrifice, lifting us upward unto God, and contentment and submission to the most holy Will of God. So He says to us, showing how the true Rest is to come into our souls, "Take My yoke upon you (and is not His yoke the Cross?) and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find Rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." If we learn of Him, He will become our Rest. He will fill our souls with the riches of His liberal Love. He will satisfy them with the abundance of His Joy and Gladness. For as He ever dwelleth in infinite

Joy, Gladness, and Peace, when we have found Him, and He has surely taken up His abode in our hearts, then the streams of Joy, and Gladness, and Peace, will flow into our souls. And the more we purge our souls from all covetous desires of the flesh, and of the world, emptying them of all the vain idols, which are an offence unto Him, the things of this world upon which our hearts are sorely set, the more fully will the heavenly streams flood our souls and enrich them with "the chief things of the ancient mountains, and the precious things of the lasting hills."

Point V. When the rich young man came unto our blessed LORD, and asked Him what good thing he should do that he might inherit eternal life, our LORD told him, that if he would enter into Life, he should keep the commandments. And when he professed that he had kept them from his youth up, and asked what he still lacked, our LORD bade him sell all that he had, and give to the poor, and come take up the Cross, and follow Him. But at this point his obedience broke down, for the spirit of liberality did not rule his heart. So it is with others as well as with him. People think that they are safe, and going on in a satisfactory way, because hitherto they have not broken down in their obedience. But the day of visitation comes. "GOD[1] sees the self, which they see not in their service, obedience, worship. He lays upon them some commandment, slight perhaps, perhaps almost unreasonable in appearance as that laid on Saul. He forbids them some little indulgence, as

[1] Milman's "Love of the Atonement," p. 228.

He did our first parents. He exposes them to a momentary pressure of distress, or want, as He did Esau; or He requires them to give up earthly comforts, as He did the rich young man; or He entrusts them with some special responsibility, some office perhaps or ministry of religion, or mercy holy and blessed, as He entrusted the alms-bag to Judas. *There*, in that little summons, that slight demand upon their faith, that gracious charge, His Judgment and their probation are wrapped up." If, at such a time as this, when CHRIST is calling you to give up something, or to do something, however great or little it may seem to be, your heart is set to do His Will, whatever may be the cost of the sacrifice, whether it be sorrow, or pain, or humiliation, or acknowledgment of sin, or self-abasement, that is to issue out of the act, you will count the cost; and then having counted the cost, you will deliberately and calmly give yourself up to follow CHRIST. If, on the other hand, all your seeming religion is but a form of self-seeking and self-pleasing, you will fail in the day of visitation.

May GOD give us all Grace, first of all to hear the sound of His still, small voice, and then cheerfully to follow It without reserve; that we may prove ourselves the true sheep of the Good Shepherd; for His sheep hear His Voice, and follow Him.

MEDITATION XIV.[1]

OUR LORD'S DILIGENCE.

NOWHERE can we see more clearly the perfection of Diligence, nowhere does sloth appear in a more dreadful aspect, than at the foot of the Cross. As we lift up our eyes unto Him, Who finished His Life of infinite labours upon the cruel bed of the Cross, working even there with still greater earnestness for the salvation of men, and ceasing not until He was able to say "It is finished;" all our slothful excuses show themselves in the true light, making clearly manifest how weak, how little, how imperfect is our Faith. Oh! may our crucified REDEEMER increase our Faith, and give unto us a portion of His own Spirit; Who, having loved His own, loved them unto the end.

Point I. Consider then, that the Cross was the end and the completion of His labours. For this end came He into the world. As it is written, "Lo! I come to do Thy will, O GOD." By the which Will we are sanctified through the offering of the Body of JESUS CHRIST once. All His Life through the shadow of His tremendous Sufferings rested upon His Soul, yet He rejoiced as a giant to run His Race. But how often do we draw back from a duty which lies before us, and endeavour to find some excuse which may save us from performing it, when we see or imagine that it will bring us sorrow and trouble. The sorrow

[1] Given on Good Friday.

or trouble may take many shapes: it may be that we shall risk or lose the good opinion of men; or we may have to sacrifice some friendship, which we dearly prize; or our own ease and comfort may be quite taken away to serve the purposes of another man's comfort; or even direct pain of body, or mental suffering, or shame, or danger, or loss may be the result. So our hearts begin to fail, and to sink down within us. We dwell upon our weakness, we try to think that our duty does not lie in *this* direction, that God cannot be requiring *this* at our hands. Ah! then, brethren, let us remember Jesus, our Lord. Let us lift up our eyes and gaze tenderly and reverently upon His Cross, and think, He loved me, and gave Himself for me, I will not shrink back when He doth call me. Draw me, O Lord, I will run after Thee.

Point II. Now the reason of our Lord's perseverance was His perfect obedience. The reason of our failure is our want of faith, and our consequent imperfect obedience. If we were perfectly convinced that the Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul, then we should have no hesitation in our obedience. But we doubt God's Word. We think our own reason, or the sight of our eyes, is more to be trusted than the Law of the living God. Though we have proved, over and over again, the truth of God's promises; though we have experienced in our hearts and lives the power of His Grace, yet when a new call comes, and the Cross stands plainly in our way, our Faith begins to grow small. So much are we encompassed with the body of infirmities.

Still, the very presence of the Cross should of itself

recall us to ourselves, revealing as it does the Presence of Him Who conquered on the Cross. For the way of the Cross is without any doubt the way of JESUS, it is therefore, the way of safety, the way of Grace, the way of victory, the way of true happiness. When fear, then, begins to sadden us, let us lift up our hearts unto Him, saying, "O SAVIOUR of the world, Who by Thy Cross and Precious Blood hast redeemed us, save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O LORD."

Point III. As sloth is an habitual neglect of doing our duty, so diligence is an habitual striving after obedience. The Life of our blessed LORD from Bethlehem to Calvary, was made up of unceasing acts of obedience. Throughout His Life, His meat and drink was to do the will of His FATHER, and to finish His Work. We shall learn, then, to be truly diligent, if we are diligent in every duty of our life, great or little, trivial or important. Each day we should do whatever our hand findeth to do with all our heart. Then to-day's diligence will prepare for to-morrow's; making us more willing and ready to do the works required of us, and more able to do them. The things which merely minister to sloth will grow more and more distasteful to us, and so our whole life will be filled with the spirit of diligence. And this our holy diligence will not content itself with barely doing each duty of the day as it arises, but it will make us do it well. A slovenly performance of our duties is as clear an evidence of slothfulness of disposition, as plain neglect of them is: nay it is perhaps more really *slothful.* *Let* us examine ourselves in this.

Point IV. Diligence in doing the Will of GOD and in fulfilling the work which He has given us to do, arises from a devout and fervent Love. Now Love is enkindled by Love, and being enkindled, burns with more fervent heat in the presence of Love. If we have learnt at all to love JESUS, it is because He first loved us, and gave Himself for us. If then we contemplate for a little while the marvellous, unwearied, unceasing Love of CHRIST, displayed all throughout His Life, but bursting out into amazing splendour on the Cross, our hearts will surely be more than touched, our affections more than moved, our will perfectly subdued; so that the spirit of devotion and diligence will take possession of us. It was His unwearied Love that led Him into the Garden of Gethsemane, to endure there the fearful burden of our sins, to be faithlessly kissed by the traitor Judas, to be delivered into the hands of those who sought His Life. It was His unwearied Love that made Him endure with unspeakable meekness and gentleness, the insults of the Chief Priests, the contempt of Herod, the mockeries of the soldiers, the cowardly judgment of Pilate. It was His unwearied Love which drew not back when the howling multitude demanded Barabbas, and required to have Him crucified, when He was led forth to execution, made to bear the Cross, brought to Calvary. It was His unwearied Love that endured the Cross, despising the shame, hanging in agony the most cruel, in thirst the most excruciating, in desolation the most heart-rending,[1] with outstretched Hands, blessing, interceding, suffering all the day long, not

[1] Psalm lxix. 21.

between Aaron and Hur, but between two thieves. It was His unwearied Love that prayed for His enemies, converted His fellow-sufferer, spoke words of sweet comfort to His woe-stricken Mother. But most of all, it was His unwearied Love that through all these sufferings, and sufferings of mind and spirit, which are past all our conception (for they arose from the pressure of the whole world's sins, iniquities, crimes, enormities, forgetfulnesses) endured unto the end; and overcame Satan, and Death, and all the powers of Hell, made an Atonement for us, and reconciled us unto GOD.

Point V. Consider further the Constancy of His Love; the perfection of His Diligence. Having loved His Own, He loved them unto the end. He was willing to endure that extremity of desolation, the depth of which we cannot know nor fathom, which caused Him to say, "My GOD, My GOD, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" because He loved us. Sooner than forsake us, whom He had come to save, He would know and endure the full misery of being, as it were, forsaken of the FATHER. Ah! what can we say to Love so boundless, so precious! Love which surpasses even all our conceptions of what Love might be, and what it might do and suffer. Oh! no. He would not have us to be lost. That there might be a chance, and an opening, and a place for repentance to every man, He loved us unto the end. And this He did, knowing that so many would reject Him, would speak evil of Him, would injure His Disciples, would despise His Doctrine, would pervert His Faith, would forsake His Church, and would disgrace His

Name, by pretending to be Christians, and living worse than heathens. Oh! wonderful Love of JESUS. May we learn something of its exceeding preciousness; may we show how it has moved our hearts, and penetrated our souls, and filled our spirits, by our carefulness and diligence in seeking to do His will.

LORD JESUS, touch our hearts, knit them unto Thee, and bind us fast unto Thyself; give us courage, give us devotion, increase our faith, and fill us with love to Thee. Can we find, O LORD JESUS, a friend whose love will equal Thine; Thou, who hast feared no pain, no sorrow, no shame, no weariness, no desolation for our sakes? Lead us wherever Thou wilt, and by whatever ways Thou wilt; only keep us ever near unto Thyself. For where Thou art is joy, and to be with Thee, nay, to suffer for Thee, is everlasting gladness. Lead us whithersoever Thou wilt, only let us know that Thou art leading; and graciously grant that Thy HOLY SPIRIT may abide with us for ever, lest we should at any time give way, and fail, through the infirmity of the flesh. Be with us, LORD, for ever, defend us from all our enemies, from their power and their malice; let them not have the dominion over us, who are called by Thy Name, and have been washed in Thy most precious Blood; but by Thy Cross and Passion, Good LORD, deliver us.

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